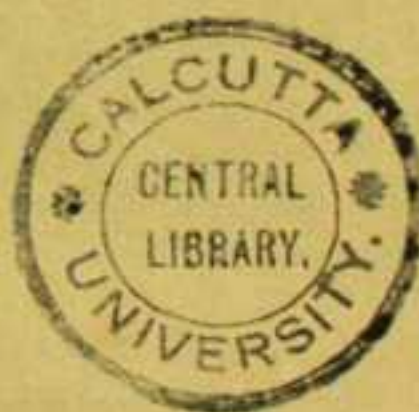




# SELECT READINGS FROM ENGLISH PROSE

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# SELECT READINGS FROM ENGLISH PROSE

## COWPER'S LETTERS

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is hard upon us striplings, who have uncles still living (*N.B.*—I myself have an uncle still alive) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question; that I, for instance, should find in one page of your letter a hope, that Miss Shuttleworth would be of your party, and be told in the next, that she is engaged to your uncle. Well we may perhaps never be uncles, but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming, when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privileges of old age and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies, to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments if you please to your sister Eliza, and tell her that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember, that at a place called Weston, a little more than a mile from Olney, there lives a family, whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor is a young man, whom I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel, and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance



of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civilest terms, in which he told me, that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, he should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties, as make it very precarious. Our reception was however flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us, than we could possibly have expected, indeed rather more than any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine, but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree, that I thought would shelter us both, a large elm, in a grove, that fronts the mansion. Mrs. T. observed us, and running towards us in the rain, insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk, and is certainly their only retreat, in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it, in a manner, that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would send us one a few days afterwards in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going towards the house and exchanged bows, and courtesies at a distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the courtyard ring, and saw Mr. T. advancing hastily towards us. We made equal haste to meet him, he presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed





a singular favour, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance; but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call now and then, and to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way; neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments, neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry. Mr. T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, etc.,  
W. C.

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## THE WHITE KNIGHT

(FROM "ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS")

She thought she had never seen such a strange-looking soldier in all her life.

He was dressed in tin armour, which seemed to fit him very badly, and he had a queer little deal box fastened across his shoulders upside-down, and with the lid hanging open. Alice looked at it with great curiosity.

"I see you're admiring my little box," the Knight said in a friendly tone. "It's my own invention—to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see I carry it upside-down, so that the rain can't get in."

"But the things can get out," Alice gently remarked. "Do you know the lid's open?"



"I didn't know it," the Knight said, a shade of vexation passing over his face. "Then all the things must have fallen out! And the box is no use without them." He unfastened it as he spoke, and was just going to throw it into the bushes, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he hung it carefully on a tree. "Can you guess why I did that?" he said to Alice.

Alice shook her head.

"In hopes some bees may make a nest in it—then I should get the honey."

"But you've got a bee-hive—or something like one—fastened to the saddle," said Alice.

"Yes, it's a very good bee-hive," the Knight said in a discontented tone, "one of the best kind. But not a single bee has come near it yet. And the other thing is a mouse-trap. I suppose the mice keep the bees out—or the bees keep the mice out, I don't know which."

"I was wondering what the mouse-trap was for," said Alice. "It isn't very likely there would be any mice on the horse's back."

"Not very likely, perhaps," said the Knight; "but, if they *do* come, I don't choose to have them running all about."

"You see," he went on after a pause, "it's as well to be provided for *everything*. That's the reason the horse has anklets round his feet."

"But what are they for?" Alice asked in a tone of great curiosity.

"To guard against the bites of sharks," the Knight replied. "It's an invention of my own. And now help me on. I'll go with you to the end of the wood—What's that dish for?"

"It's meant for plum-cake," said Alice.

"We'd better take it with us," the Knight said. "It'll come in handy if we find any plum-cake. Help me to get it into this bag."

This took a long time to manage, though Alice held the bag open very carefully, because the Knight was so *very* awkward



in putting in the dish: the first two or three times that he tried he fell in himself instead. "It's rather a tight fit, you see," he said, as they got it in at last; "there are so many candle-sticks in the bag." And he hung it to the saddle, which was already loaded with bunches of carrots, and fire-irons, and many other things.

"I hope you've got your hair well fastened on?" he continued, as they set off.

"Only in the usual way," Alice said, smiling.

"That's hardly enough," he said anxiously. "You see the wind is so *very* strong here. It's as strong as soap."

"Have you invented a plan for keeping one's hair from being blown off?" Alice inquired.

"Not yet," said the Knight. "But I've got a plan for keeping it from *falling* off."

"I should like to hear it very much."

"First you take an upright stick," said the Knight. "Then you make your hair creep up it, like a fruit-tree. Now the reason hair falls off is because it hangs *down*—things never fall *upwards*, you know. It's my own invention. You may try it if you like."

It didn't sound a comfortable plan, Alice thought, and for a few minutes she walked on in silence, puzzling over the idea, and every now and then stopping to help the poor Knight, who certainly was *not* a good rider.

Whenever the horse stopped (which it did very often), he fell off in front; and whenever it went on again (which it generally did rather suddenly), he fell off behind. Otherwise he kept on pretty well, except that he had a habit of now and then falling off sideways; and as he generally did this on the side on which Alice was walking, she soon found that it was the best plan not to walk *quite* close to the horse.

"I'm afraid you've not had much practice in riding," she ventured to say, as she was helping him up from his fifth tumble.

The Knight looked very much surprised, and a little offended at the remark. "What makes you say that?" he asked, as



he scrambled back into the saddle, keeping hold of Alice's hair with one hand, to save himself from falling over on the other side.

"Because people don't fall off quite so often, when they've had much practice."

"I've had plenty of practice," the Knight said very gravely: "plenty of practice!"

Alice could think of nothing better to say than, "Indeed?" but she said it as heartily as she could. They went on a little way in silence after this, the Knight with his eyes shut, muttering to himself, and Alice watching anxiously for the next tumble.

"The great art of riding," the Knight suddenly began in a loud voice, waving his right arm as he spoke, "is to keep—" Here the sentence ended as suddenly as it had begun, as the Knight fell heavily on the top of his head exactly in the path where Alice was walking. She was quite frightened this time, and said in an anxious tone, as she picked him up, "I hope no bones are broken."

"None to speak of," the Knight said, as if he didn't mind breaking two or three of them. "The great art of riding, as I was saying, is—to keep your balance. Like this you know—"

He let go the bridle, and stretched out both his arms to show Alice what he meant, and this time he fell flat on his back, right under the horse's feet.

"Plenty of practice!" he went on repeating all the time that Alice was getting him on his feet again. "Plenty of practice!"

"It's too ridiculous!" cried Alice, getting quite out of patience. "You ought to have a wooden horse on wheels, that you ought!"

"Does that kind go smoothly?" the Knight asked in a tone of great interest, clasping his arms round the horse's neck as he spoke, just in time to save himself from tumbling off again.

"Much more smoothly than a live horse," Alice said, with a little scream of laughter, in spite of all she could do to prevent it.



"I'll get one," the Knight said thoughtfully to himself.  
"One or two—several."

There was a short silence after this; then the Knight went on again. "I'm a great hand at inventing things. Now, I dare say you noticed, the last time you picked me up, that I was looking thoughtful?"

"You *were* a little grave," said Alice.

"Well, just then I was inventing a new way of getting over a gate—would you like to hear it?"

"Very much indeed," Alice said politely.

"I'll tell you how I came to think of it," said the Knight. "You see, I said to myself, 'The only difficulty is with the feet: the *head* is high enough already.' Now first I put my head on the top of the gate—then the head's high enough—then I stand on my head—then the feet are high enough, you see—then I'm over, you see."

"Yes, I suppose you'd be over when that was done," Alice said thoughtfully: "but don't you think it would be rather hard?"

"I haven't tried it yet," the Knight said, gravely: "so I can't tell for certain—but I'm afraid it *would* be a little hard."

He looked so vexed at the idea that Alice changed the subject hastily. "What a curious helmet you've got!" she said cheerfully. "Is that your invention too?"

The Knight looked down proudly at his helmet, which hung from the saddle. "Yes," he said, "but I've invented a better one than that—like a sugar-loaf. When I used to wear it, if I fell off the horse, it always touched the ground directly. So I had a *very* little way to fall, you see—But there *was* the danger of falling *into* it, to be sure. That happened to me once—and the worst of it was, before I could get out again, the other White Knight came and put it on. He thought it was his own helmet."

The Knight looked so solemn about it that Alice did not dare to laugh. "I'm afraid you must have hurt him," she said in a trembling voice, "being on the top of his head."

"I had to kick him, of course," the Knight said, very seriously. "And then he took the helmet off again—but it



took hours and hours to get me out. I was as fast as—as lightning, you know.”

“ But that’s a different kind of fastness,” Alice objected.

The Knight shook his head. “ It was all kinds of fastness with me, I can assure you! ” he said. He raised his hands in some excitement as he said this, and instantly rolled out of the saddle, and fell headlong into a deep ditch.

Alice ran to the side of the ditch to look for him. She was rather startled by the fall, as for some time he had kept on very well, and she was afraid that he really *was* hurt this time. However, though she could see nothing but the soles of his feet, she was much relieved to hear that he was talking on in his usual tone. “ All kinds of fastness,” he repeated: “ but it was careless of him to put another man’s helmet on—with the man in it, too.”

“ How can you go on talking so quietly, head downwards? ” Alice asked, as she dragged him out by the feet, and laid him in a heap on the bank.

The Knight looked surprised at the question. “ What does it matter where my body happens to be? ” he said. “ My mind goes on working all the same. In fact, the more head downwards I am, the more I keep inventing new things.”

*Lewis Carroll*

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## THE INSIDE OF THE EARTH

It may seem, at first, hardly possible that man should ever know anything about the earth’s interior. Think what a huge ball this globe of ours is, and how, in living and moving over its surface, we are merely like flies walking over a great hill. All that can be seen from the top of the highest mountain to the bottom of the deepest mine is not more, in comparison with the





size of the whole earth, than the thickness of the mere varnish on the outside of a school-globe.

And yet a good deal may be learnt as to what takes place within the earth. Here and there, in different countries, there are places where communication exists between the interior and the surface; and it is from such places that much of our information on this subject is derived. Volcanoes or *Burning-mountains* are among the most important of these channels of communication.

Suppose you were to visit one of these volcanoes just before what is called an "eruption." From the distance it appears as a conical mountain with its top cut off. From this truncated summit white cloud rises, but not quite such a cloud as may be seen on an ordinary hill-top. For after watching it a little time, you would notice that it rises out of the top of the mountain, even when the sky is cloudless. Ascending from the vegetation of the lower grounds, you would find that the slopes consist partly of loose stones and ashes, partly of rough black sheets of rock, like the slags of an iron furnace. Nearer the top the ground feels hot, and puffs of steam, together with stifling vapours, come out of it here and there. At last when the summit is reached, what seemed from below to be a level top is seen to be in reality a great basin, with steep walls descending into the depths of the mountain. Screening your face as well as possible from the hot gases which would almost choke you, you might creep to the edge of this basin and look down into it. Far below, at the base of the rough red and yellow cliffs which form its sides, lies a pool of some liquid glowing with a white heat, though covered for the most part with a black crust like that seen on the outside of the mountain during the ascent. From this fiery pool jets of the red-hot liquid are jerked out every now and then, and harden into stone as they are cooled in the air. Showers of stones and dust are shot forth and fall back again into the caldron or down the outside of the mountain. Clouds of steam ascend from the same source to form the uprising cloud which is seen from a great distance, hanging over the mountain top.



The caldron-shaped hollow on the summit of the mountain is called the *Crater*. The intensely heated liquid in the sputtering boiling pool at its bottom is melted rock or *Lava*. The fragmentary materials—ashes, dust, cinders, and stones—are torn from liquid lava or from the hardened sides and bottom of the crater by the violence of the explosions with which the gases and steam escape.

The hot air and steam, and the melted mass at the bottom of the crater, show that there must be some source of intense heat underneath. And, as in the case of the well-known volcanoes, Etna and Vesuvius, this heat has been coming out for hundreds or even thousands of years without sensible diminution.

But it is when the volcano appears in active eruption that the power of this underground heat shows itself most markedly. For a day or two beforehand the ground around the mountain trembles. At length, in a series of violent explosions, the heart of the volcano is torn open, and perhaps its upper part is blown into the air. Huge clouds of steam roll away up for thousands of feet into the air, mingled with fine dust and red-hot stones. The heavier stones fall back again into the crater, or on the outer slopes of the mountain, but the finer ashes come out in such quantity as sometimes to spread over the sky and make noonday as dark as midnight for many miles round. These ashes or dust partly settle down over the surrounding country as a thick covering and partly are carried away into other regions by upper currents of the atmosphere. Streams of molten lava run down the outside of the mountain, and descend even to the gardens and houses at the base, burning up or overflowing whatever lies in their path. This state of matters continues for days or weeks, until the volcano exhausts itself, and then a time of comparative quiet comes when only steam, hot vapours, and gases are given off.

About 1,800 years ago there was a mountain near Naples shaped like a volcano, and with a large crater covered with brushwood. No one had ever seen any steam, or ashes, or lava come from it, and the people did not imagine it to be a volcano,



like some other mountains in that part of Europe. They had built villages and towns around its base, and their district, from its beauty and soft climate, used to attract wealthy Romans to build villas there. But at last, after hardly any warning, the whole of the higher part of the mountain was blown into the air with terrific explosions. Such showers of fine ashes fell for miles around that the day was as dark as midnight. Day and night, the ashes and stones descended on the surrounding country; many of the inhabitants were killed, either by stones falling on them, or from suffocation by the dust. When at last the eruption ceased, the district, which had before drawn visitors from all parts of the Old World, was found to be a mere desert of gray dust and stones. Towns and villages, vineyards and gardens, were all buried. Of the towns, the two most noted, called Herculaneum and Pompeii, so completely disappeared that, although important places at the time, their very sites were forgotten, and only by accident, after the lapse of some fifteen hundred years, were they discovered. Excavations have since that time been carried on, the hardened volcanic accumulations have been partially removed from the two old towns, and one can now walk through the streets of Pompeii again, with their roofless dwelling-houses and shops, theatres and temples, and mark on the causeway the deep ruts worn by the carriage wheels of the Pompeians eighteen centuries ago. Beyond the walls of the new silent city rises Mount Vesuvius, with its smoking crater, covering one-half of the old mountain which was blown up when Pompeii disappeared.

Volcanoes, then, mark the position of some of the holes or orifices, whereby heated materials from the inside of the earth are thrown up to the surface. They occur in all quarters of the globe. In Europe, besides Mount Vesuvius, which has been more or less active since its great eruption in the first century, Etna, Stromboli, Santorin, and other smaller volcanoes, occur in the basin of the Mediterranean; while far to the north-west, active volcanoes rise amid the snows and glaciers of Iceland. In South America a chain of huge volcanoes stretches down the range of the Andes, that rise near the western margin of the



continent. In Asia, volcanoes are thickly grouped together in Java and surrounding islands, where in August, 1883 there occurred at the island of Krakatoa the most stupendous volcanic eruption of recent times. From that district a line of active volcanoes stretches through Japan and the Aleutian Isles to the extremity of North America. Tracing this distribution upon the map, we observe that the Pacific Ocean is girdled round with volcanoes.

Since these openings into the interior of the earth are so numerous over the surface, it has been inferred that the interior is intensely hot. But other proofs of this internal heat may be gathered. In many countries *hot springs* rise to the surface. In some volcanic districts hot water and steam gush out at intervals with great force into the air for a height of a hundred feet or more. Even in England, which is a long way from any active volcano, the water of the wells of Bath is quite warm (120° Fahr.). It is known, too, that in all countries the heat increases as we descend into the earth. The deeper a mine the warmer are the rocks and air at its bottom. If the heat continues to increase in the same proportion, the rocks must be red-hot at no great distance beneath us. The conclusion has, therefore, been drawn that this globe on which we live has a comparatively thin, cool outer shell or crust, within which the interior is intensely hot.

The explosions of a volcano shake the ground, sometimes with great violence. But the solid earth is affected by movements even remote from any volcano. Very delicate instruments have revealed that though the ground beneath us seems to be perfectly steady, it is continually affected by slight tremors. When the movement becomes strong enough to be quite perceptible it is called an *Earthquake*, which may vary from a feeble, hardly sensible trembling of the ground up to a violent concussion, whereby the ground is convulsed and even rent open, trees, rocks, and buildings are thrown down, and sometimes thousands of people are killed. Earthquakes are more particularly frequent and destructive in mountainous regions, along ocean borders, and around active volcanoes.





Though earthquakes may destroy much life and property, they do not permanently alter the face of the globe so much as another kind of earth-movement of a much slower and less startling nature. Some parts of the land are slowly rising. When this upheaval takes place in maritime tracts, rocks that used always to be covered by the tides come to lie wholly beyond their limits; while others, once never to be seen at all, begin one by one to show their heads above water. On the other hand, some regions are slowly sinking; piers, sea-walls, and other old landmarks on the beach, are one after another enveloped by the sea as it encroaches farther and higher on the land.

Even at the present day, therefore, we know that one result of the movement of the outer part or crust of the earth is to raise some regions above the level of the sea, and to increase the height of others that are already dry land. Reflecting on this process, we soon perceive that it must be by such elevations that dry land continues upon the face of the earth. If rain and frost, rivers, glaciers, and the sea, were continually and without check to wear down the surface of the land, that surface would necessarily in the end disappear, and indeed must have disappeared long ago. But, on the one hand, owing to the pushing out of some parts of the earth's surface from within, portions of the land are raised to a higher level, while parts of the bed of the sea are actually upheaved so as to form land. On the other hand, certain larger tracts, more particularly of the ocean-floor sink inward; the ocean-basins are thus deepened, and in some measure the level of the sea is thereby lowered.

This kind of oscillation has happened many times in all quarters of the globe. Most of our hills and valleys are formed of rocks which were originally laid down on the bottom of the sea, and have been subsequently raised into land. In almost every country proofs may be found that the land has repeatedly been submerged and re-elevated.

*Sir Archibald Geikie*

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## THE LORD OF CHATEAU NOIR

It was in the days when the German armies had broken their way across France, and when the shattered forces of the young Republic had been swept away to the north of the Aisne and to the south of the Loire. Three broad streams of armed men had rolled slowly but irresistibly from the Rhine, now meandering to the north, now to the south, dividing, coalescing but all uniting to form one great lake round Paris. And from this lake there welled out smaller streams—one to the north, one southward to Orleans, and a third westward to Normandy. Many a German trooper saw the sea for the first time when he rode his horse girth-deep into the waves at Dieppe.

Black and bitter were the thoughts of Frenchmen when they saw this weal of dishonour slashed across the fair face of their country. They had fought and they had been overborne. That swarming cavalry, those countless footmen, the masterful guns—they had tried and tried to make head against them. In battalions their invaders were not to be beaten, but man to man, or ten to ten, they were their equals. A brave Frenchman might still make a single German rue the day that he had left his own bank of the Rhine. Thus, unchronicled amid the battles and the sieges, there broke out another war, a war of individuals, with foul murder upon the one side and brutal reprisal on the other.

Colonel von Gramm, of the 24th Posen Infantry, had suffered severely during this new development. He commanded in the little Norman town of Les Andelys, and his outposts stretched amid the hamlets and farmhouses of the district round. No French force was within fifty miles of him, and yet morning after morning he had to listen to a black report of sentries found dead at their posts, or of foraging parties which had never returned. Then the colonel would go forth in his wrath, and farmsteads would blaze and villages tremble; but next morning there was still that same dismal tale to be told. Do what he might, he could not shake off his invisible enemies. And yet it should not have been so hard, for from certain



signs in common, in the plan and in the deed, it was certain that all these outrages came from a single source.

Colonel von Gramm had tried violence, and it had failed. Gold might be more successful. He published it abroad over the countryside that 500 frs. would be paid for information. There was no response. Then 800 frs. The peasants were incorruptible. Then, goaded on by a murdered corporal, he rose to a thousand, and so bought the soul of François Rejane, farm labourer, whose Norman avarice was a stronger passion than his French hatred.

"You say that you know who did these crimes?" asked the Prussian colonel eyeing with loathing the blue-bloused, rat-faced creature before him.

"Yes, colonel."

"And it was——?"

"Those thousand francs, colonel——"

"Not a sou until your story has been tested. Come! Who is it who has murdered my men?"

"It is Count Eustace of Château Noir."

"You lie!" cried the colonel, angrily. "A gentleman and a nobleman could not have done such crimes."

The peasant shrugged his shoulders.

"It is evident to me that you do not know the count. It is this way, colonel. What I tell you is the truth, and I am not afraid that you should test it. The Count of Château Noir is a hard man, even at the best time he was a hard man. But of late he has been terrible. It was his son's death, you know. His son was under Douay, and he was taken, and then in escaping from Germany he met his death. It was the count's only child, and indeed we all think that it has driven him mad. With his peasants he follows the German armies. I do not know how many he has killed, but it is he who cut the cross upon the foreheads, for it is the badge of his house."

It was true. The murdered sentries had each had a saltire cross flashed across their brows, as by a hunting-knife. The colonel bent his stiff back and ran his forefinger over the map which lay upon the table.



"The Château Noir is not more than four leagues," he said.

"Three and a kilometre, colonel."

"You know the place?"

"I used to work there."

Colonel von Gramm rang the bell.

"Give this man food and detain him," said he to the sergeant.

"Why detain me, colonel? I can tell you no more."

"We shall need you as guide."

"As guide! But the count? If I were to fall into his hands? Ah, colonel——"

The Prussian commander waved him away. "Send Captain Baumgarten to me at once," said he.

The officer who answered the summons was a man of middle-age, heavy-jawed, blue-eyed, with a curving yellow moustache, and a brick-red face which turned to an ivory white where his helmet had sheltered it. He was bald, with a shining, tightly stretched scalp, at the back of which, as in a mirror, it was a favourite mess-joke of the subalterns to trim their moustaches. As a soldier he was slow, but reliable and brave. The colonel could trust him where a more dashing officer might be in danger.

"You will proceed to Château Noir to-night, captain," said he. "A guide has been provided. You will arrest the count and bring him back. If there is an attempt at rescue, shoot him at once."

"How many men shall I take, colonel?"

"Well we are surrounded by spies, and our only chance is to pounce upon him before he knows that we are on the way. A large force will attract attention. On the other hand, you must not risk being cut off."

"I might march north, colonel, as if to join General Goeben. Then I could turn down this road which I see upon your map, and get to Château Noir before they could hear of us. In that case, with twenty men——"





"Very good, captain. I hope to see you with your prisoner to-morrow morning."

It was a cold December night when Captain Baumgarten marched out of Les Andelys with his twenty Poseners, and took the main road to the north-west. Two miles out he turned suddenly down a narrow, deeply rutted track, and made swiftly for his man. A thin, cold rain was falling, swishing among the tall poplar trees, and rustling in the fields on either side. The captain walked first with Moser, a veteran sergeant, beside him. The sergeant's wrist was fastened to that of the French peasant, and it had been whispered in his ear that in case of an ambush the first bullet fired would be through his head. Behind them the twenty infantrymen plodded along through the darkness with their faces sunk to the rain, and their boots squeaking in the soft, wet clay. They knew where they were going, and why, and the thought upheld them, for they were bitter at the loss of their comrades. It was a cavalry job, they knew, but the cavalry were all on with the advance, and, besides, it was more fitting that the regiment should avenge its own dead men.

It was nearly eight when they left Les Andelys. At half-past eleven their guide stopped at a place where two high pillars, crowned with some heraldic stonework, flanked a huge iron gate. The wall in which it had been the opening had crumbled away, but the great gate still towered above the brambles and weeds which had overgrown its base. The Prussians made their way round it, and advanced stealthily, under the shadow of a tunnel of oak branches, up the long avenue, which was still cumbered by the leaves of last autumn. At the top they halted and reconnoitred.

The black château lay in front of them. The moon had shone out between two rain-clouds, and threw the old house into silver and shadow. It was shaped like an L, with a low arched door in front, and lines of small windows like the open ports of a man-of-war. Above was a dark roof, breaking at the corners into little round overhanging turrets, the whole lying



silent in the moonshine, with a drift of ragged clouds blackening the heavens behind it. A single light gleamed in one of the lower windows.

The captain whispered his orders to his men. Some were to creep to the front door, some to the back. Some were to watch the east, and some the west. He and the sergeant stole on tiptoe to the lighted window.

It was a small room into which they looked, very meanly furnished. An elderly man, in the dress of a menial, was reading a tattered paper by the light of a guttering candle. He leaned back in his wooden chair with his feet upon a box, while a bottle of white wine stood with a half-filled tumbler upon a stool beside him. The sergeant thrust his needle-gun through the glass, and the man sprang to his feet with a shriek.

"Silence, for your life! The house is surrounded, and you cannot escape. Come round and open the door, or we will show you no mercy when we come in."

"For God's sake, don't shoot! I will open it! I will open it!" He rushed from the room with his paper still crumpled up in his hand. An instant later, with a groaning of old locks and a rasping of bars, the low door swung open, and the Prussians poured into the stone-flagged passage.

"Where is Count Eustace de Château Noir?"

"My master! He is out, sir."

"Out at this time of night? Your life for a lie!"

"It is true, sir. He is out!"

"Where?"

"I do not know."

"Doing what?"

"I cannot tell. No, it is no use your cocking your pistol, sir. You may kill me, but you cannot make me tell you that which I do not know."

"Is he often out at this hour?"

"Frequently."

"And when does he come home?"

"Before daybreak."



Captain Baumgarten rasped out a German oath. He had had his journey for nothing, then. The man's answers were only too likely to be true. It was what he might have expected. But at least he would search the house and make sure. Leaving a picket at the front door and another at the back, the sergeant and he drove the trembling butler in front of them—his shaking candle sending strange, flickering shadows over the old tapestries and the low, oak-raftered ceilings. They searched the whole house, from the huge, stone-flagged kitchen below to the dining-hall on the second floor, with its gallery for musicians, and its panelling black with age, but nowhere was there a living creature. Up above, in an attic, they found Marie, the elderly wife of the butler; but the owner kept no other servants, and of his own presence there was no trace.

It was long, however, before Captain Baumgarten had satisfied himself upon the point. It was a difficult house to search. Thin stairs, which only one man could ascend at a time, connected lines of tortuous corridors. The walls were so thick that each room was cut off from its neighbour. Huge fire-places yawned in each, while the windows were 6 ft. deep in the wall. Captain Baumgarten stamped with his feet, tore down curtains, and struck with the pommel of his sword. If there were secret hiding-places, he was not fortunate enough to find them.

"I have an idea," said he, at last, speaking in German to the sergeant. "You will place a guard over this fellow, and make sure that he communicates with no one."

"Yes, captain."

"And you will place four men in ambush at the front and at the back. It is likely enough that about daybreak our bird may return to the nest."

"And the others, captain?"

"Let them have their suppers in the kitchen. This fellow will serve you with meat and wine. It is a wild night, and we shall be better here than on the country road."

"And yourself, captain?"



"I will take my supper up here in the dining-hall. The logs are laid and we can light the fire. You will call me if there is any alarm. What can you give me for supper—you?"

"Alas, monsieur, there was a time when I might have answered, 'What you wish!' but now it is all that we can do to find a bottle of new claret and a cold pullet."

"That will do very well. Let a guard go about with him, sergeant, and let him feel the end of a bayonet if he plays us any tricks."

Captain Baumgarten was an old campaigner. In the Eastern provinces, and before that in Bohemia, he had learned the art of quartering himself upon the enemy. While the butler brought his supper he occupied himself in making his preparations for a comfortable night. He lit the candelabrum of ten candles upon the centre table. The fire was already burning up, crackling merrily, and sending spurts of blue, pungent smoke into the room. The captain walked to the window and looked out. The moon had gone in again, and it was raining heavily. He could hear the deep sough of the wind, and see the dark loom of the trees, all swaying in the one direction. It was a sight which gave a zest to his comfortable quarters, and to the cold fowl and the bottle of wine which the butler had brought up for him. He was tired and hungry after his long tramp, so he threw his sword, his helmet, and his revolver-belt down upon a chair, and fell to eagerly upon his supper. Then with his glass of wine before him and his cigar between his lips, he tilted his chair back and looked about him.

He sat within a small circle of brilliant light which gleamed upon his silver shoulder-straps, and threw out his terra-cotta face, his heavy eyebrows, and his yellow moustache. But outside that circle things were vague and shadowy in the old dining-hall. Two sides were oak-panelled and two were hung with faded tapestry, across which huntsmen and dogs and stags were still dimly streaming. Above the fireplace were rows of heraldic shields with the blazonings of the family and of its alliances, the fatal saltire cross breaking out on each of them.

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Four paintings of old seigneurs of Château Noir faced the fireplace, all men with hawk noses and bold, high features, so like each other that only, the dress could distinguish the Crusader from the Cavalier of the Fronde. Captain Baumgarten, heavy with his repast, lay back in his chair looking up at them through the clouds of his tobacco smoke, and pondering over the strange chance which had sent him, a man from the Baltic coast, to eat his supper in the ancestral hall of these proud Norman chieftains. But the fire was hot, and the captain's eyes were heavy. His chin sank slowly upon his chest, and the ten candles gleamed upon the broad, white scalp.

Suddenly a slight noise brought him to his feet. For an instant it seemed to his dazed senses that one of the pictures opposite had walked from its frame. There, beside the table, and almost within arm's length of him, was standing a huge man, silent, motionless, with no sign of life save his fierce, glinting eyes. He was black-haired, olive-skinned, with a pointed tuft of black beard, and a great, fierce nose, towards which all his features seemed to run. His cheeks were wrinkled like a last year's apple, but his sweep of shoulder, and bony, corded hands, told of a strength which was unsapped by age. His arms were folded across his arching chest, and his mouth was set in a fixed smile.

"Pray do not trouble yourself to look for your weapons," he said, as the Prussian cast a swift glance at the empty chair in which they had been laid. "You have been, if you will allow me to say so, a little indiscreet to make yourself so much at home in a house every wall of which is honeycombed with secret passages. You will be amused to hear that forty men were watching you at your supper. Ah! what then?"

Captain Baumgarten had taken a step forward with clenched fists. The Frenchman held up the revolver which he grasped in his right hand, while with the left he luried the German back into his chair.

"Pray keep your seat," said he. "You have no cause to trouble about your men. They have already been provided for,

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It is astonishing with these stone floors how little one can hear what goes on beneath. You have been relieved of your command, and have now only to think of yourself. May I ask what your name is? "

" I am Captain Baumgarten, of the 24th Posen Regiment."

" Your French is excellent, though you incline, like most of your countrymen to turn the ' p ' into a ' b.' I have been amused to hear them cry '*Avez bitié sur moi!*' You know, doubtless, who it is who addresses you."

" The Count of Château Noir."

" Precisely. It would have been a misfortune if you had visited my château and I had been unable to have a word with you. I have had to do with many German soldiers, but never with an officer before. I have much to talk to you about."

Captain Baumgarten sat still in his chair. Brave as he was, there was something in this man's manner which made his skin creep with apprehension. His eyes glanced to right and to left, but his weapons were gone, and in a struggle he saw that he was but a child to this gigantic adversary. The count had picked up the claret bottle and held it to the light.

" Tut! tut! " said he. " And was this the best that Pierre could do for you? I am ashamed to look you in the face, Captain Baumgarten. We must improve upon this."

He blew a call upon a whistle which hung from his shooting-jacket. The old manservant was in the room in an instant.

" Chambertin from bin 15! " he cried, and a minute later a grey bottle, streaked with cobwebs, was carried in as a nurse bears an infant. The count filled two glasses to the brim.

" Drink! " said he. " It is the very best in my cellars, and not to be matched between Rouen and Paris. Drink, sir, and be happy! There are cold joints below. There are two lobsters, fresh from Honfleur. Will you not venture upon a second and more savoury supper? "

The German officer shook his head. He drained the glass, however, and his host filled it once more, pressing him to give an order for this or that dainty.





" There is nothing in my house which is not at your disposal. You have but to say the word. Well, then, you will allow me to tell you a story while you drink your wine. I have so longed to tell it to some German officer. It is about my son, my only child, Eustace, who was taken and died in escaping. It is a curious little story, and I think that I can promise you that you will never forget it.

" You must know, then, that my boy was in the artillery—a fine young fellow, Captain Baumgarten, and the pride of his mother. She died within a week of the news of his death reaching us. It was brought by a brother officer who was at his side throughout, and who escaped, while my lad died. I want to tell you all that he told me.

" Eustace was taken at Weissenburg on the 4th of August. The prisoners were broken up into parties and sent back into Germany by different routes. Eustace was taken upon the 5th to a village called Lauterburg, where he met with kindness from the German officer in command. This good colonel had the hungry lad to supper, offered him the best he had, opened a bottle of good wine, as I have tried to do for you, and gave him a cigar from his own case. Might I entreat you to take one from mine? "

The German again shook his head. His horror of his companion had increased as he sat watching the lips that smiled and the eyes that glared.

" The colonel," as I say, " was good to my boy. But unluckily, the prisoners were moved next day across the Rhine into Ettlingen. They were not equally fortunate there. The officer who guarded them was a ruffian and a villain, Captain Baumgarten. He took a pleasure in humiliating and ill-treating the brave men who had fallen into his power. That night, upon my son answering fiercely back to some taunt of his, he struck him in the eye, like this! "

The crash of the blow rang through the hall. The German's face fell forward, his hand up, and blood oozing through his fingers. The count settled down in his chair once more.



"My boy was disfigured by the blow, and this villain made his appearance the object of his jeers. By the way, you look a little comical yourself at the present moment, captain, and your colonel would certainly say that you had been getting into mischief. To continue, however, my boy's youth and his destitution—for his pockets were empty—moved the pity of a kind-hearted major, and he advanced him ten Napoleons from his own pocket without security of any kind. Into your hands, Captain Baumgarten, I return these ten gold pieces, since I cannot learn the name of the lender. I am grateful from my heart for this kindness shown to my boy.

"The vile tyrant who commanded the escort accompanied the prisoners to Durlack, and from there to Carlsruhe. He heaped every outrage upon my lad, because the spirit of the Château Noirs would not stoop to turn away his wrath by a feigned submission. Ay, this cowardly villain, whose heart's blood shall yet clot upon this hand, dared to strike my son with his open hand, to kick him, to tear hairs from his moustache—to use him thus—and thus and thus!"

The German writhed and struggled. He was helpless in the hands of this huge giant whose blows were raining upon him. When at last, blinded and half-senseless, he staggered to his feet, it was only to be hurled back again into the great oaken chair. He sobbed in his impotent anger and shame.

"My boy was frequently moved to tears by the humiliation of his position," continued the count. "You will understand me when I say that it is a bitter thing to be helpless in the hands of an insolent and remorseless enemy. On arriving at Carlsruhe, however, his face, which had been wounded by the brutality of his guard, was bound up by a young Bavarian subaltern who was touched by his appearance. I regret to see that your eye is bleeding so. Will you permit me to bind it with my silk handkerchief?"

He leaned forward, but the German dashed his hand aside.



"I am in your power, you monster!" he cried; "I can endure your brutalities, but not your hypocrisy."

The count shrugged his shoulders.

"I am taking things in their order, just as they occurred," said he. "I was under vow to tell it to the first German officer with whom I could talk *tête-à-tête*. Let me see. I had got as far as the young Bavarian at Carlsruhe. I regret extremely that you will not permit me to use such slight skill in surgery as I possess. At Carlsruhe, my lad was shut up in the old caserne, where he remained for a fortnight. The worst pang of his captivity was that some unmannerly curs in the garrison would taunt him with his position as he sat by his window in the evening. That reminds me, captain, that you are not quite situated upon a bed of roses yourself, are you now? You came to trap a wolf, my man, and now the beast has you down with his fangs in your throat. A family man, too, I should judge, by that well-filled tunic. Well, a widow the more will make little matter, and they do not usually remain widows long. Get back into the chair, you dog!

"Well, to continue my story—at the end of a fortnight my son and his friend escaped. I need not trouble you with the dangers which they ran, or with the privations which they endured. Suffice it that to disguise themselves they had to take the clothes of two peasants, whom they waylaid in a wood. Hiding by day and travelling by night, they had got as far into France as Remilly, and were within a mile—a single mile, captain—of crossing the German lines when a patrol of Uhlans came right upon them. Ah! it was hard, was it not, when they had come so far and were so near to safety?" The count blew a double call upon his whistle, and three hard-faced peasants entered the room.

"These must represent my Uhlans," said he. "Well, then, the captain in command, finding that these men were French soldiers in civilian dress within the German lines, proceeded to hang them without trial or ceremony. I think, Jean, that the centre beam is the strongest."



The unfortunate soldier was dragged from his chair to where a noosed rope had been flung over one of the huge oaken rafters which spanned the room. The cord was slipped over his head, and he felt its harsh grip round his throat. The three peasants seized the other end, and looked to the count for his orders. The officer, pale, but firm, folded his arms and stared defiantly at the man who tortured him.

"You are now face to face with death, and I perceive from your lips that you are praying. My son was also face to face with death, and he prayed, also. It happened that a general officer came up, and he heard the lad praying for his mother, and it moved him so—he being himself a father—that he ordered his Uhlans away, and he remained with his aide-de-camp only, beside the condemned men. And when he heard all the lad had to tell—that he was the only child of an old family, and that his mother was in failing health—he threw off the rope as I throw off this, and he kissed him on either cheek, as I kiss you, and he bade him go, as I bid you go, and may every kind wish of that noble general, though it could not stave off the fever which slew my son, descend now upon your head."

And so it was that Captain Baumgarten, disfigured, blinded, and bleeding, staggered out into the wind and the rain of that wild December dawn.

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

### THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF VIKRAMADITYA

For many centuries in Indian history there was no city so famous as the city of Ujjain. It was always renowned as the seat of learning. Here lived at one time the poet Kalidas, one of the supreme poets of the world, fit to be named with Homer and Dante and Shakespeare. And here worked and visited, only a hundred and fifty years ago, an Indian king, who was also a great and learned astronomer, the greatest of his day, Rajah





Jey Singh of Jeypore. So one can see what a great love all who care for India must feel for the ancient city of Ujjain.

But deep in the hearts of the Indian people, one name is held even dearer than those I have mentioned—the name of Vikramaditya, who became King of Malwa, it is said, in the year 57 before Christ. How many, many years ago must that be! But so clearly is he remembered, that to this day when a Hindu wants to write a letter, after putting something religious at the top—‘The Name of the Lord,’ or ‘Call on the Lord,’ or something of the sort—and after writing his address, as we all do in beginning a letter, when he states the *date*, he would not say, ‘of the year of the Lord 1900,’ for instance, meaning 1900 years after Christ, as we might, but he would say ‘of the year 1957 of the *Era of Vikramaditya*.’\* So we can judge for ourselves whether that name is ever likely to be forgotten in India. Now who was the Vikramaditya, and why was he so loved? The whole of that secret, after so long a time, we can scarcely hope to recover. He was like our King Arthur, or like Alfred the Great—so strong and true and gentle that the men of his own day almost worshipped him, and those of all after times were obliged to give him\*the first place, though they had never looked in his face, nor appealed to his great and tender heart—simply because they could see that never king had been loved like this king. But one thing we do know about Vikramaditya. It is told of him that he was the greatest judge in history.

Never was he deceived. Never did he punish the wrong man. The guilty trembled when they came before him, for they knew that his eyes would look straight into their guilt. And those who had difficult questions to ask, and wanted to know the truth, were thankful to be allowed to come, for they knew that their King would never rest till he understood the matter, and that then he would give an answer that would convince all.

And so, in after time in India, when any judge pronounced sentence with great skill, it would be said of him ‘Ah, he must

\* The name of this era is *Samvat*.





have sat in the judgment-seat of Vikramaditya! ' And this was the habit of speech of the whole country. Yet in Ujjain itself, the poor people forgot that the heaped-up ruins a few miles away had been his palace, and only the rich and learned, and the wise men who lived in kings' courts, remembered.

The story I am about to tell you happened long, long ago; but yet there had been time for the old palace and fortress of Ujjain to fall into ruins, and for the sand to be heaped up over them, covering the blocks of stone, and bits of old wall, often with grass and dust, and even trees. There had been time, too, for the people to forget.

In those days, the people of the villages, as they do still, used to send their cows out to the wild land to graze.

Early in the morning they would go, in the care of the shepherds, and not return till evening, close on dusk. How I wish I could show you that coming and going of the Indian cows!

Such gentle little creatures they are, with such large wise eyes, and a great hump between their shoulders! And they are not timid or wild, like our cattle. For in India, amongst the Hindus, every one loves them. They are very useful and precious in that hot, dry country, and no one is allowed to tease or frighten them. Instead of that, the little girls come at daybreak and pet them, giving them food and hanging necklaces of flowers about their necks, saying poetry to them, and even strewing flowers before their feet! And the cows, for their part, seem to feel as if they belonged to the family, just as our cats and dogs do.

If they live in the country, they delight in being taken out to feed on the grass in the daytime; but of course some one must go with them, to frighten off wild beasts, and to see that they do not stray too far. They wear little tinkling bells, that ring as they move their heads, saying, ' Here! here! ' And when it is time to go home to the village for the night, what a pretty sight they make!



One cowherd stands and calls at the edge of the pasture and another goes around behind the cattle, to drive them towards him, and so they come quietly forward from here and there, sometimes breaking down the brushwood in their path. And when the herdsmen are sure that all are safe, they turn homewards—one leading in front, one bringing up the rear, and the cows making a long procession between them. As they go they kick up the dust along the sun-baked path, till at last they seem to be moving through a cloud, with the last rays of the sunset touching it. And so the Indian people call twilight, cowdust, 'the hour of cowdust.' It is a very peaceful, a very lovely moment. All about the village can be heard the sound of the children playing. The men are seated, talking, round the foot of some old tree, and the women are gossiping or praying in their houses.

To-morrow, before dawn, all will be up and hard at work again, but this is the time of rest and joy.

Such was the life of the shepherd boys in the villages about Ujjain. There were many of them, and in the long days on the pastures they had plenty of time for fun. One day they found a playground.\* Oh, how delightful it was! The ground under the trees was rough and uneven. Here and there the end of a great stone peeped out, and many of these stones were beautifully carven. In the middle was a green mound, looking just like a judge's seat.

One of the boys thought so at least, and he ran forward with a whoop and seated himself on it. 'I say, boys,' he cried, 'I'll be judge and you can all bring cases before me, and we'll have trials!' Then he straightened his face, and became very grave, to act the part of judge.

The others saw the fun at once, and, whispering amongst themselves, quickly made up some quarrel, and appeared before him, saying very humbly, 'May your worship be pleased to settle between my neighbour and me which is in the right?' Then they stated the case, one saying that a certain field was his another that it was not, and so on.





But now a strange thing made itself felt. When the judge had sat down on the mound, he was just a common boy. But when he had heard the question, even to the eyes of the frolicsome lads, he seemed quite different. He was now full of gravity, and, instead of answering in fun, he took the case seriously, and gave an answer which in that particular case was perhaps the wisest that man had ever heard.

The boys were a little frightened. For though they could not appreciate the judgment, yet his tone and manner were strange and impressive. Still they thought it was fun, and went away again, and, with a good deal more whispering, concocted another case. Once more they put it to their judge, and once more he gave a reply, as it were, out of the depth of a long experience, with incontrovertible wisdom. And this went on for hours and hours, he sitting on the judge's seat, listening to the questions propounded by the others, and always pronouncing sentence with the same wonderful gravity and power. Till at last it was time to take the cows home, and then he jumped down from his place, and was just like any other cowherd.

The boys could never forget that day, and whenever they heard of any perplexing dispute they would set this boy on the mound, and put it to him. And always the same thing happened. The spirit of knowledge and justice would come to him, and he would show them the truth. But when he came down from his seat, he would be no different from other boys.

Gradually the news of this spread through the country-side, and grown-up men and women from all the villages about that part would bring their law-suits to be decided in the court of the herd-boys on the grass under the green trees. And always they received a judgment that both sides understood, and went away satisfied. So all the disputes in that neighbourhood were settled.

Now Ujjain had long ceased to be a capital, and the King now lived very far away, hence it was some time before he heard the story. At last, however, it came to his ears. 'Why,' he said, 'that boy must have sat on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya!' He spoke without thinking, but all around him were



learned men, who knew the chronicles. They looked at one another. 'The King speaks truth,' they said; 'the ruins in yonder meadows were once Vikramaditya's palace!'

Now this sovereign had long desired to be possessed with the spirit of law and justice. Every day brought its problems and difficulties to him, and he often felt weak and ignorant in deciding matters that needed wisdom and strength. 'If sitting on the mound brings it to the shepherd boy,' he thought, 'let us dig deep and find the Judgment-Seat. I shall put it in the chief place in my hall of audience, and on it I shall sit to hear all cases. Then the spirit of Vikramaditya will descend on me also, and I shall always be a just judge!'

So men with spades and tools came to disturb the ancient peace of the pastures, and the grassy knoll where the boys had played was overturned. All about the spot were now heaps of earth and broken wood and upturned sod. And the cows had to be driven further afield. But the heart of the boy who had been judge was sorrowful, as if the very home of his soul were being taken away from him.

At last the labourers came on something. They uncovered it—a slab of black marble, supported on the hands and outspread wings of twenty-five stone angels, with their faces turned outwards as if for flight—surely the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.

With great rejoicing it was brought to the city, and the King himself stood by while it was put in the chief place in the hall of justice. Then the nation was ordered to observe three days of prayer and fasting, for on the fourth day the King would ascend the new throne publicly, and judge justly amongst the people.

At last the great morning arrived, and crowds assembled to see the Taking of the Seat. Pacing through the long hall came the judges and priests of the kingdom, followed by the sovereign. Then, as they reached the Throne of Judgment, they parted into two lines, and he walked up the middle, prostrated himself before it, and went close up to the marble slab.



When he had done this, however, and was just about to sit down, one of the twenty-five stone angels began to speak. 'Stop!' it said: 'Thinkest thou that thou art worthy to sit on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya? Hast thou never desired to bear rule over kingdoms that were not thine own?' And the countenance of the stone angel was full of sorrow.

At these words the King felt as if a light had blazed up within him, and shown him a long array of tyrannical wishes. He knew that his own life was unjust. After a long pause he spoke. 'No,' he said, 'I am *not* worthy.'

'Fast and pray yet three days,' said the angel, 'that thou mayest purify thy will, and make good thy right to seat thyself thereon.' And with these words it spread its wings and flew away. And when the King lifted up his face, the place of the speaker was empty, and only twenty-four figures supported the marble slab.

And so there was another three days of royal retreat, and he prepared himself with prayer and with fasting to come again and essay to sit on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.

But this time it was even as before. Another stone angel addressed him, and asked him a question which was yet more searching. 'Hast thou *never*,' it said, 'coveted the riches of another?'

And when at last he spoke and said, 'Yea, I have done this thing; I am not worthy to sit on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya!' the angel commanded him to fast and pray yet another three days, and spread its wings and flew away into the blue.

At last four times twenty-four days had gone, and still three more days of fasting, and it was now the hundredth day. Only one angel was left supporting the marble slab, and the King drew near with great confidence, for to-day he felt sure of being allowed to take his place.

But as he drew near and prostrated, the last angel spoke: 'Art thou, then, perfectly pure in heart, O King?' it said. 'Is





thy will like unto that of a little child? If so, thou art indeed worthy to sit on this seat!'

'No,' said the King, speaking very slowly, and once more searching his own conscience, as the judge examines the prisoner at the bar, but with great sadness; 'no, I am not worthy.'

And at these words the angel flew up into the air, bearing the slab upon its head, so that never since that day has it been seen upon the earth.

But when the King came to himself and was alone, pondering over the matter, he saw that the last angel had explained the mystery. Only he who was pure in heart, like a little child, could be perfectly just. That was why the shepherd boy in the forest could sit where no king in the world might come, on the Judgment-Seat of Vikramaditya.

*Sister Nivedita*

## AKBAR

Akbar was the grandson of that joyous and superb adventurer Babur, who, inheriting the throne of a small, though delectable, country in the middle of Asia, spent his life in fighting for a grander throne; he ended by swooping down on Hindostan and conquering there a great dominion. His son Humayun held this precariously till he was driven out by rival rulers of Afghan race; after years of exile he won back his throne, only to die. Humayun's son, Akbar, then but a boy, had to fight for his inheritance. He secured it; and then, piece by piece, kingdom by kingdom, he annexed in an almost incessant series of wars the countries surrounding his frontiers, till his empire stretched from sea to sea. Except for that southern portion of India called the Deccan, he became master of India.

Such was his achievement as conqueror. His greater achievement as a ruler was to weld this collection of different



states, different races, different religions, into a whole. It was accomplished by elaborate organisation—Akbar had an extraordinary genius for detail—still more by the settled policy which persuaded his subjects of the justice of their ruler. Akbar's conceptions were something new in the history of Asiatic conquerors. Though a foreigner, he identified himself with the India he had conquered. And much of his system was to be permanent. The principles and practice worked out by Akbar and his ministers were largely adopted into the English system of government.

Yet Akbar's achievements are transcended in interest by the man himself. And it is the portrait of the man rather than the story of his doings with which we shall be most concerned. The full record of his conquest and administration can be read in the pages of Mr. Vincent Smith's *Akbar, the Great Mogul*: a volume which has its faults and which is sometimes curiously unjust to its hero, but in which is collected a vast amount of solid information. The chief original authority is the *Akbar-namah*, the *Story of Akbar*, written in Persian by the Emperor's friend and minister, Abul Fazl. There are other Indian histories. But of greater interest to us perhaps, are the vivid accounts given by the Jesuits who stayed at Akbar's court and sometimes accompanied him on his expeditions.

Hardly any one so conspicuously eminent in history is so plainly set before our eyes, or has so actual a presence in our imagination. The detailed records of his daily life, no less than of his achievements, are corroborated not only by numerous portraits but by a long series of small paintings (very many of which are now in England), in which his manifold activities are vividly depicted. We have him before our eyes in his prime of life. He is compact of frame, muscular, rather burly; of moderate stature, but broad-shouldered; neither lean nor stout; of a healthy complexion, the colour of ripe wheat. His eyes, rather small, but with long lashes, sparkle like the points of light on little waves when they catch the sun. He wears moustaches, but no beard. His voice is loud and full. When



he laughs, it is with his whole face. His movements are quick, though from much riding in his youth he is slightly bow-legged. He carries his head a little on one side over the right shoulder. His nose is no commanding beak; it is straight and small, the nostrils wide and mobile. Below the left nostril is a wart, thought to be very agreeable in appearance. In whatever assemblage of men, he is recognisably the king. He radiates energy. His temper is naturally violent; and he is aware of it, so much so, that his orders are that no death-warrant is to be carried out till it is twice confirmed. His anger is terrible, but easily appeased. He has an insatiable curiosity, and loves new things. His mind is as incessantly employed as his body.

And yet strange to say, Akbar, the greatest and, except possibly Philip of Spain, the wealthiest potentate of his time in the world, a man versed in history and poetry and delighting in philosophical discussion, is illiterate. He can neither read nor write. It is true that there exists on the flyleaf of a precious manuscript copy of the 'Life of Timur,' Akbar's ancestor, a single signature of his, laboriously written in a childish hand and reverently attested by his son Jahangir. But this signature, preserved as a unique marvel, only confirms the universal testimony to his inability. Yet, if unable to read, he is all the more able to remember. He has books read aloud to him, and knows them better than if he had read them himself. His memory indeed is as prodigious as his energy.

A traveller from Europe in the latter part of the sixteenth century who should arrive at last in the Mogul's dominion would find no difficulty in seeing the Emperor at close quarters and enjoying his conversation. Foreigners were welcome; and indeed among those who habitually thronged the courtyards at Fatehpur-Sikri, that strange splendid city built at Akbar's whim and afterwards so suddenly abandoned, were men of various Asiatic races, predominantly Persians, Turks, and Hindus, and of many diverse creeds. 'The Great Mogul' was a sort of fairy-tale in the West; yet here were all the marks of a civilisation closely parallel with that of Europe, though so





different on the surface. The external magnificence might have some touches of the barbaric; but then what barbarities mingled with the refinements of European courts! What dirt was disguised by the perfumes! Refinements were here of every sort: a love of letters and the arts. Poetry was held in high honour. Painters and architects abounded, under the direct patronage of the Emperor, who himself had learnt to draw and was a skilled musician, besides being a worker in half a dozen handicrafts. If theological disputation and religious animosities were a sign of high civilisation, these rivalled in fierceness those of Western countries; but while in Europe the disputants burnt or massacred one another in their zeal, and devastated whole countries in the name of religion, here in India a restraining power prevented arguments from ending in the use of swords: here was a monarch who actually believed in toleration.

Any day, then, our traveller might have seen Akbar holding a reception; for he holds audience twice a day. The blaze of the Indian sun makes strong shadows from the verandah-pillars of the red sandstone palace, where Akbar receives one courtier or envoy after another. Peacocks sun themselves on the roof of the verandah; in the courtyard elephants are slowly led; a groom holds a cheetah in leash; an animated crowd of virile-looking men in dresses of fine silk and of various colours stand about. Akbar himself is dressed in a surcoat reaching to the knees and wears a closely-rolled turban hiding his hair; a rope of great pearls hangs from his neck. His manner has subtle changes. With the great he is great and does not unbend; to the humble he is kindly and sympathetic. It is noticeable how he makes more of the small presents of the poor (and he is very fond of presents) than of the costly gifts of the nobles, at which he will hardly glance. As a dispenser of justice he is famous; every one wronged (an observer has said) 'believes the Emperor is on his side.'

Four times in twenty-four hours Akbar prays to God; at sunrise, at noon, at sunset, and midnight. But any one who tried to keep up with his daily activities would need to be of





iron make. Three hours suffice for Akbar's sleep. He eats but one meal a day, and that at no fixed time. He eats but little meat, less and less as he grows older: 'Why should we make ourselves a sepulchre for beasts?' is one of his sayings. Rice and sweetmeats are the chief of his diet, and fruit, of which he is extremely fond. His day is a long one, and he fills it full. Between state councils and conferences with ministers or generals he inspects his elephants—of which he has five thousand in his stables—his horses, and other animals. He knows them by name. He notes their condition; if any show signs of growing thin and poorly, the keeper responsible finds his salary docked. Presently he will repair to an upper terrace where are the dove-cotes, built of blue and white brick, and with infinite pleasure he watches the evolutions of the tumbler-pigeons, deploying and returning, massing or separating, to the sound of a whistle. At another time he will be watching (like Marcus Aurelius) gladiatorial combats, or fights between elephants, or between elephants and lions. But though entering with such zest on his amusements, his mind is occupied also with other things: for messengers arrive continually from every part of the empire and rapid decisions have to be taken. Another time he is inspecting his school of painters, passing quickly among them and appraising their work. Or he will go down to the workshop, and turn carpenter or stone-mason. He is especially fond of the foundry, and loves to found a cannon with his own hands.

When at evening lights are lit in the great hall, the Emperor takes his seat among his courtiers and has books read to him; or music is played, and Akbar himself joins in or he laughs at jests and stories. If there are foreigners present, he plies them with unceasing questions. He will sit far into the night absorbed in discussions on religion: this is one of his dear delights. Yet this crowded, pulsing life does not wholly absorb him. Frequently he will disappear and sit apart in solitary meditation for hours at a time.



Such is Akbar's way of life at court. But these are only intervals between campaigns, which he always opens with a hunt on an enormous scale. Even on his campaigns he will, when there is no need for swift marching, pursue much the same occupations.

Of how many notable people in the world's history does our knowledge seem so complete?

Yet do we really, after all, know Akbar the man? What is the truth about his character? Quite contrary opinions have been expressed; and many of his actions can be interpreted in opposite ways.

Since the witness of Akbar's own historian, Abul Fazl, may be thought too prejudiced, let us turn to the Jesuits; they certainly had no motive for giving Akbar more than his due.

The truth about Akbar is not simple, his was by nature a complex character; in the intricacy of circumstances its complexity was bound to be increased. But let us try to approach it a little closer. The Jesuits came into contact with Akbar through discussions on religion. He had sent for them of his own accord, and they had hoped to convert him. They had every excuse for being exasperated with him, since he always in the end eluded their grasp, and nothing is more natural than Bartoli's angry outburst: "He never gave anybody the chance to understand rightly his inmost sentiments." But when the question of religion is in abeyance, when the ground is neutral and there is no occasion for prejudice, we find a different tone.

*The king is by nature simple and straightforward.* These are the words of the Jesuit Monserrate, who accompanied Akbar on his Kabul expedition; and the occasion was the discovery by Akbar of treachery on the part of a man he had loaded with honours. 'Naturally humane, gentle and kind' is the phrase of Peruschi. 'Just to all men,' says another

'By nature simple and straightforward: 'that, I think, is the truth; but we must stress a little that *by nature*. For, that





a man should live the life led by Akbar, accomplish what he accomplished, and succeed in being always simple and straightforward, would be something of a miracle. In continual danger from his boyhood, he was surrounded by treachery, jealousy, and intrigue. He seldom knew whom he could trust. He had continually to wear a mask and to hide his thoughts in self-defence. The astonishing thing is that he did not end in protecting himself by an armour of permanent suspicion and guile, but that he would often trust men after they had proved unfaithful, still seeking to find 'if any portion of good remains in that evil nature,' as he said on one occasion. Fundamentally, he was honest and sincere. See how, when he meets a transparently honest nature, like Ridolfo Aquaviva, the mutual liking is instinctive.

'Naturally humane and kind.' Every one was struck by this aspect of Akbar's character, remarkable indeed in one who had the absolute powers of an autocrat and who suffered so much from faithless servants.

Akbar's clemency, like Caesar's, was famous. Was he also, like Caesar, an epileptic? The native historians say nothing of it, nor does Monserate, the Jesuit, who knew him intimately. The statement that he had the falling sickness is casually made in Du Jarric's compilation from Jesuit notes and records, on what authority is unknown, and only there. The Jesuits supposed that he took to sports and amusements to distract his melancholy; which seems a superfluous conjecture. But the fact of the disease is not improbable. Akbar's second son Murad developed epilepsy.

'Just to all men.' It was Akbar's justice that chiefly reconciled the peoples he conquered to his rule. It was a basic quality in his nature. And it proceeded not so much, I think, from a sense of law, as from a sort of uncorrupted innocence of mind which persisted through all his experience of the world. Innocence may seem a strange word to use. I mean an innate candour powerful enough to be able to see things unclouded by





the prejudices, which we absorb from our surroundings or inherit from the past or imbibe from early teaching, and to which most natures unconsciously surrender. There were impositions which for centuries the Muhammadan conquerors had laid upon the Hindus. They had been accepted as things of course. They were the conquerors' due. To Akbar with his direct vision they seemed unjust; and though hardly more than a boy, against all tradition, against the opposition of every one, he abolished them. It was again in the teeth of the most dangerous opposition that he made overtures to the Jesuits and seemed on the verge of adopting Christianity. What held him back in the end? It was the thought to which, with a child's obstinacy, he was always returning: there are good men professing every creed, and each proclaiming his creed to be true, all the others false; how can one be sure that he is right? He was the antithesis of a bigot. On the other hand, he was anything but indifferent. For in this man of action, this lover of life, whose body exulted in its strength and who strode through the world so confidently, there was hidden a profound capacity for sadness, self-doubting thoughts, dissatisfactions, a craving for illumination. From boyhood he had, from time to time, mystical experiences, in which he seemed to be given direct communion with the Divine Presence; and on his death-bed, when he was past recognising men and past all speech, while eager theologians hung over him in the hope to direct the departing soul, he was heard murmuring to himself and endeavouring to articulate the name of God.

*Laurence Binyon*

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## THE DEAR DEPARTED

*Characters*

MRS. AMELIA SLATER  
 MRS. ELIZABETH JORDAN      SISTERS  
 HENRY SLATER      }  
 BEN JORDAN        }      THEIR HUSBANDS  
 VICTORIA SLATER: A GIRL OF TEN  
 ABEL MERRYWEATHER

The action takes place in a provincial town in England on a  
 Saturday afternoon

NOTE.—The terms "Left" and "Right" in the stage directions refer to the spectator's left and right, not the actor's.

[The scene is the sitting-room of a small house in a lower middle-class district of a provincial town. On the spectator's left is the window, with the blinds down. A sofa is in front of it. On his right is a fireplace with an armchair by it. In the middle of the wall, facing the spectator is the door into the passage. To the left of the door a cheap, shabby chest of drawers, to the right a sideboard. In the middle of the room is the table, with chairs round it. Ornaments and a cheap American clock are on the mantelpiece, in the hearth a kettle. By the sideboard a pair of gaudy new carpet slippers. The table is partly laid for tea, and the necessaries for the meal are on the sideboard, as also are copies of an evening paper and of "Tit-Bits" and "Pearson's Weekly." Turning to the left through the door takes you to the front door; to the right, upstairs. In the passage a hatstand is visible.

When the Curtain rises Mrs. Slater is seen laying the table. She is a vigorous, red-faced woman, prepared to do any amount of straight talking to get her own way. She is in black, but not in complete mourning. She listens a moment and then goes to the window, opens it and calls into the street.]





MRS. SLATER [*sharply*]. Victoria, Victoria! D'ye hear? Come in, will you?

[*Mrs. Slater closes window and puts the blind straight and then returns to her work at the table. Victoria, a precocious girl of ten, dressed in colours, enters.*]

I'm amazed at you, Victoria; I really am. How you can be gallivanting about in the street with your grandfather lying dead and cold upstairs, I don't know. Be off now, and change your dress before your Aunt Elizabeth and your Uncle Ben come. It would never do for them to find you in colours.

VICTORIA. What are they coming for? They haven't been here for ages.

MRS. SLATER. They're coming to talk over poor grandpa's affairs. Your father sent them a telegram as soon as we found he was dead.

[*A noise is heard.*]

Good gracious, that's never them. [*Mrs. Slater hurries to the door and opens it.*] No, thank goodness! it's only your father.

[*Henry Slater, a stooping, heavy man with a drooping moustache, enters. He is wearing a black tail coat, grey trousers, a black tie and a bowler hat. He carries a little paper parcel.*]

HENRY. Not come yet, eh?

MRS. SLATER. You can see they haven't, can't you. Now, Victoria, be off upstairs and that quick. Put your white frock on with a black sash.

[*Victoria goes out.*]

[*To Henry.*] I'm not satisfied, but it's the best we can do till our new black's ready, and Ben and Elizabeth will never have thought about mourning yet, so we'll outshine them there.

[*Henry sits in the armchair by the fire.*]

Get your boots off, Henry; Elizabeth's that prying she notices the least speck of dirt.



HENRY. I'm wondering if they'll come at all. When you and Elizabeth quarrelled she said she'd never set foot in your house again.

MRS. SLATER. She'll come fast enough after her share of what grandfather's left. You know how hard she can be when she likes. Where she gets it from I can't tell.

[*Mrs. Slater unwraps the parcel Henry has brought. It contains sliced tongue, which she puts on a dish on the table.*]

HENRY. I suppose it's in the family.

MRS. SLATER. What do you mean by that, Henry Slater?

HENRY. I was referring to your father, not to you. Where are my slippers?

MRS. SLATER. In the kitchen; but you want a new pair, those old ones are nearly worn out. [*Nearly breaking down.*] You don't seem to realize what it's costing me to bear up like I am doing. My heart's fit to break when I see the little trifles that belonged to grandfather lying around, and think he'll never use them again. [*Briskly.*] Here! you'd better wear these slippers of grandfather's now. It's lucky he'd just got a new pair.

HENRY. They'll be very small for me, my dear.

MRS. SLATER. They'll stretch, won't they? I'm not going to have them wasted. [*She has finished laying the table.*] Henry, I've been thinking about that bureau of grandfather's that's in his bed-room. You know I always wanted to have it after he died.

HENRY. You must arrange with Elizabeth when you're dividing things up.

MRS. SLATER. She'll see I'm after it, and she'll drive a hard bargain over it. Eh, what it is to have a low, money-grabbing spirit!

HENRY. Perhaps she's got her eye on the bureau as well.



MRS. SLATER. \*She's never been here since grandfather bought it. If it was only down here instead of in his room, she'd never guess it wasn't our own.

HENRY [*startled*]. Amelia! [*He rises.*]

MRS. SLATER. Henry, why shouldn't we bring that bureau down here now. We could do it before they come.

HENRY [*stupefied*]. I wouldn't care to.

MRS. SLATER. Don't look so daft. Why not?

HENRY. It doesn't seem delicate, somehow.

MRS. SLATER. We could put that shabby old chest of drawers upstairs where the bureau is now. Elizabeth could have that and welcome. I've always wanted to get rid of it.  
[*She points to the drawers.*]

HENRY. Suppose they come when we're doing it.

MRS. SLATER. I'll fasten the front door. Get your coat off, Henry; we'll change it.

[*Mrs. Slater goes out to fasten the front door. Henry takes his coat off. Mrs. Slater reappears.*]

I'll run up and move the chairs out of the way.

[*Victoria appears, dressed according to her mother's instructions.*]

VICTORIA. Will you fasten my frock up the back, mother?

MRS. SLATER. I'm busy; get your father to do it.

[*Mrs. Slater hurries upstairs, and Henry fastens the frock.*]

VICTORIA. What have you got your coat off for, father?

HENRY. Mother and me is going to bring grandfather's bureau down here.

VICTORIA [*after a moment's thought*]. Are we pinching it before Aunt Elizabeth comes?

HENRY [*shocked*]. No, my child. Grandpa gave it your mother before he died.





VICTORIA. This morning?

HENRY. Yes.

VICTORIA. Ah! He was drunk this morning.

HENRY. Hush; you mustn't ever say he was drunk, now.

*[Henry has fastened the frock, and Mrs. Slater appears carrying a handsome clock under her arm.]*

MRS. SLATER. I thought I'd fetch this down as well. *[She puts it on the mantelpiece.]* Our clock's worth nothing and this always appealed to me.

VICTORIA. That's grandpa's clock.

MRS. SLATER. Chut! Be quiet! It's ours now. Come, Henry, lift your end. Victoria, don't breathe a word to your aunt about the clock and the bureau,

*[They carry the chest of drawers through the doorway.]*

VICTORIA *[to herself]*. I thought we'd pinched them.

*[After a short pause there is a sharp knock at the front door.]*

MRS. SLATER *[from upstairs]*. Victoria, if that's your aunt and uncle you're not to open the door.

*[Victoria peeps through the window.]*

VICTORIA. Mother, it's them!

MRS. SLATER. You're not to open the door till I come down.

*[Knocking repeated.]*

Let them knock away.

*[There is a heavy bumping noise.]*

Mind the wall, Henry.

*[Henry and Mrs. Slater, very hot and flushed, stagger in with a pretty old-fashioned bureau containing a locked desk. They put it where the chest of drawers was, and straighten the ornaments, etc. The knocking is repeated.]*

That was a near thing. Open the door, Victoria. Now, Henry, get your coat on. *[She helps him.]*



HENRY. Did we knock much plaster off the wall?

MRS. SLATER. Never mind the plaster. Do I look all right? [*Straightening her hair at the glass.*] Just watch Elizabeth's face when she sees we're all in half-mourning. [*Throwing him "Tit-Bits."*] Take this and sit down. Try and look as if we'd been waiting for them.

[*Henry sits in the armchair and Mrs. Slater left of table. They read ostentatiously. Victoria ushers in Ben and Mrs. Jordan. The latter is a stout, complacent woman with an impassive face and an irritating air of being always right. She is wearing a complete and deadly outfit of new mourning crowned by a great black hat with plumes. Ben is also in complete new mourning, with black gloves and a band round his hat. He is rather a jolly little man, accustomed to be humorous, but at present trying to adapt himself to the regrettable occasion. He has a bright, chirpy little voice. Mrs. Jordan sails into the room and solemnly goes straight to Mrs. Slater and kisses her. The men shake hands. Mrs. Jordan kisses Henry, Ben kisses Mrs. Slater. Not a word is spoken. Mrs. Slater furtively inspects the new mourning.*]

MRS. JORDAN. Well, Amelia, and so he's "gone" at last.

MRS. SLATER. Yes, he's gone. He was seventy-two a fortnight last Sunday. [*She sniffs back a tear.*]

[*Mrs. Jordan sits on the left of the table. Mrs. Slater on the right. Henry in the armchair. Ben on the sofa with Victoria near him.*]

BEN [*chirpily*]. Now, Amelia, you mustn't give way. We've all got to die some time or other. It might have been worse.

MRS. SLATER. I don't see how.

BEN. It might have been one of us.

HENRY. It's taken you a long time to get here, Elizabeth.

MRS. JORDAN. Oh, I couldn't do it. I really couldn't do it.

MRS. SLATER [*suspiciously*]. Couldn't do what?





MRS. JORDAN. I couldn't start without getting\* the mourning.

\* [*Glancing at her sister.*]

MRS. SLATER. We've ordered ours, you may be sure. [*Acidly.*]  
I never could fancy buying ready-made things.

MRS. JORDAN. No? For myself it's such a relief to get into the black. And now perhaps you'll tell us all about it. What did the doctor say?

MRS. SLATER. Oh, he's not been near yet.

MRS. JORDAN. Not been near?

BEN [*in the same breath*]. Didn't you send for him at once?

MRS. SLATER. Of course I did. Do you take me for a fool? I sent Henry at once for Dr. Pringle, but he was out.

BEN. You should have gone for another. Eh, Eliza?

MRS. JORDAN. Oh, yes. It's a fatal mistake.

MRS. SLATER. Pringle attended him when he was alive and Pringle shall attend him when he's dead. That's professional etiquette.

BEN. Well, you know your own business best, but—

MRS. JORDAN. Yes—it's a fatal mistake.

MRS. SLATER. Don't talk so silly, Elizabeth. What good could a doctor have done?

MRS. JORDAN. Look at the many cases of persons being restored to life hours after they were thought to be "gone."

HENRY. That's when they've been drowned. Your father wasn't drowned, Elizabeth.

BEN [*humorously*]. There wasn't much fear of that. If there was one thing he couldn't bear it was water.

[*He laughs, but no one else does.*]

MRS. JORDAN [*pained*]. Ben! [*Ben is crushed at once.*]

MRS. SLATER [*piqued*]. I'm sure he washed regular enough.

MRS. JORDAN. If he did take a drop too much at times, we'll not dwell on that, now.

MRS. SLATER. Father had been "merry" this morning. He went out soon after breakfast to pay his insurance.

BEN. My word, it's a good thing he did.





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MRS. JORDAN. He always was thoughtful in that way. He was too honourable to have "gone" without paying his premium.

MRS. SLATER. Well, he must have gone round to the "Ring-o'-Bells" afterwards, for he came in as merry as a sandboy. I says, "We're only waiting Henry to start dinner." "Dinner," he says, "I don't want no dinner, I'm going to bed!"

BEN [*shaking his head*]. Ah! Dear, dear.

HENRY. And when I came in I found him undressed sure enough and snug in bed. [*He rises and stands on the hearthrug.*]

MRS. JORDAN [*definitely*]. Yes, he'd had a "warning." I'm sure of that. Did he know you?

HENRY. Yes. He spoke to me.

MRS. JORDAN. Did he say he'd had a "warning"?

HENRY. No. He said, "Henry, would you mind taking my boots off; I forgot before I got into bed."

MRS. JORDAN. He must have been wandering.

HENRY. No, he'd got 'em on all right.

MRS. SLATER. And when we'd finished dinner I thought I'd take up a bit of something on a tray. He was lying there for all the world as if he was asleep, so I put the tray down on the bureau [*correcting herself*] on the chest of drawers—and went to waken him. [*A pause.*] He was quite cold.

HENRY. Then I heard Amelia calling for me, and I ran upstairs.

MRS. SLATER. Of course we could do nothing.

MRS. JORDAN. He was "gone"?

HENRY. There wasn't any doubt.

MRS. JORDAN. I always knew he'd go sudden in the end.

[*A pause, they wipe their eyes and sniff back tears.*]

MRS. SLATER [*rising briskly at length—in a businesslike tone*]. Well, will you go up and look at him now, or shall we have tea?



MRS. JORDAN. What do you say, Ben?

BEN. I'm not particular.

MRS. JORDAN [*surveying the table*]. Well then, if the kettle's nearly ready we may as well have tea first.

[*Mrs. Slater puts the kettle on the fire and gets tea ready.*]

HENRY. One thing we may as well decide now; the announcement in the papers.

MRS. JORDAN. I was thinking of that. What would you put?

MRS. SLATER. At the residence of his daughter, two hundred and thirty-five Upper Cornbank Street, etc.

HENRY. You wouldn't care for a bit of poetry?

MRS. JORDAN. I like "Never Forgotten." It's refined.

HENRY. Yes, but it's rather soon for that.

BEN. You couldn't very well have forgot him the day after.

MRS. SLATER. I always fancy "A loving husband, a kind father, and a faithful friend."

BEN [*doubtfully*]. Do you think that's right?

HENRY. I don't think it matters whether it's right or not.

MRS. JORDAN. No, it's more for the look of the thing.

HENRY. I saw a verse in the "Evening News" yesterday. Proper poetry it was. It rhymed. [*He gets the paper and reads.*]

"Despised and forgotten by some you may be

But the spot that contains you is sacred to we."

MRS. JORDAN. That'll never do. You don't say "Sacred to we."

HENRY. It's in the paper.

MRS. SLATER. You wouldn't say it if you were speaking properly, but it's different in poetry.

HENRY. Poetic licence, you know.

MRS. JORDAN. No, that'll never do. We want a verse that says how much we loved him and refers to all his good qualities and says what a heavy loss we've had.

MRS. SLATER. You want a whole poem. That'll cost a good lot.



MRS. JORDAN. Well, we'll think about it after tea, and then we'll look through his bits of things and make a list of them. There's all the furniture in his room.

HENRY. There's no jewellery or valuables of that sort.

MRS. JORDAN. Except his gold watch. He promised that to our Jimmy.

MRS. SLATER. Promised your Jimmy! I never heard of that.

MRS. JORDAN. Oh, but he did, Amelia, when he was living with us. He was very fond of Jimmy.

MRS. SLATER. Well [*Amazed.*] I don't know!

BEN. Anyhow there's his insurance money. Have you got the receipt for the premium he paid this morning?

MRS. SLATER. I've not seen it.

[*Victoria jumps up from the sofa and comes behind the table.*]

VICTORIA. Mother, I don't think grandpa went to pay his insurance this morning.

MRS. SLATER. He went out.

VICTORIA. Yes, but he didn't go into the town. He met old Mr. Tattersall down the street, and they went off past St. Phillip's Church.

MRS. SLATER. To the "Ring-o'-Bells," I'll be bound.

BEN. The "Ring-o'-Bells?"

MRS. SLATER. That public-house that John Shorrocks' widow keeps. He is always hanging about there. Oh, if he hasn't paid it——

BEN. Do you think he hasn't paid it? Was it overdue?

MRS. SLATER. I should think it was overdue.

MRS. JORDAN. Something tells me he's not paid it. I've a "warning," I know it; he's not paid it.

BEN. The drunken old beggar.

MRS. JORDAN. He's done it on purpose, just to annoy us.

MRS. SLATER. After all I've done for him, having to put up with him in the house these three years. It's nothing short of swindling.



MRS. JORDAN. I had to put up with him for five years.

MRS. SLATER. And you were trying to turn him over to us all the time.

HENRY. But we don't know for certain that he's not paid the premium.

MRS. JORDAN. I do. It's come over me all at once that he hasn't.

MRS. SLATER. Victoria, run upstairs and fetch that bunch of keys that's on your grandpa's dressing-table.

VICTORIA [*timidly*]. In grandpa's room?

MRS. SLATER. Yes.

VICTORIA. I—I don't like to.

MRS. SLATER. Don't talk so silly. There's no one can hurt you.

[*Victoria goes out reluctantly.*]

We'll see if he's locked the receipt up in the bureau.

BEN. In where? In this thing? [*He rises and examines it.*]

MRS. JORDAN [*also rising*]. Where did you pick that up, Amelia? It's new since last I was here.

[*They examine it closely.*]

MRS. SLATER. Oh—Henry picked it up one day.

MRS. JORDAN. I like it. It's artistic. Did you buy it at an auction?

HENRY. Eh? Where did I buy it, Amelia?

MRS. SLATER. Yes, at an auction.

BEN [*disparagingly*]. Oh, second-hand.

MRS. JORDAN. Don't show your ignorance, Ben. All artistic things are second-hand. Look at those old masters.

[*Victoria returns, very scared. She closes the door after her.*]

VICTORIA. Mother! Mother!

MRS. SLATER. What is it, child?

VICTORIA. Grandpa's getting up.

BEN. What?



MRS. SLATER. What do you say?

VICTORIA. Grandpa's getting up.

MRS. JORDAN. The child's crazy.

MRS. SLATER. Don't talk so silly. Don't you know your grandpa's dead?

VICTORIA. No, no; he's getting up. I saw him.

*[They are transfixed with amazement; Ben and Mrs. Jordan left of table; Victoria clings to Mrs. Slater, right of table; Henry near fireplace.]*

MRS. JORDAN. You'd better go up and see for yourself, Amelia.

MRS. SLATER. Here—come with me, Henry.

*[Henry draws back terrified.]*

BEN *[suddenly]*. Hist! Listen.

*[They look at the door. A slight chuckling is heard outside. The door opens, revealing an old man clad in a faded but gay dressing-gown. He is in his stockinged feet. Although over seventy, he is vigorous and well coloured; his bright, malicious eyes twinkle under his heavy, reddish-grey eyebrows. He is obviously either grandfather Abel Merryweather or else his ghost.]*

ABEL. What's the matter with little Vicky? *[He sees Ben and Mrs. Jordan.]* Hello! What brings you here? How's yourself, Ben?

*[Abel thrusts his hand at Ben, who skips back smartly and retreats with Mrs. Jordan to a safe distance below the sofa.]*

MRS. SLATER *[approaching Abel gingerly]*. Grandfather, is that you? *[She pokes him with her hand to see if he is solid.]*

ABEL. Of course it's me. Don't do that, 'Melia. What the devil do you mean by this tomfoolery?

MRS. SLATER *[to the others]*. He's not dead.

BEN. - Doesn't seem like it.



ABEL [*irritated by the whispering*]. You've kept away long enough, Lizzie; and now you've come you don't seem over-pleased to see me.

MRS. JORDAN. You took us by surprise, father. Are you keeping quite well?

ABEL [*trying to catch the words*]. Eh? What?

MRS. JORDAN. Are you quite well?

ABEL. Aye, I'm right enough but for a bit of a headache. I wouldn't mind betting that I'm not the first in this house to be carried to the cemetery. I always think Henry there looks none too healthy.

MRS. JORDAN. Well, I never!

[*Abel crosses to the armchair and Henry gets out of his way to the front of the table.*]

ABEL. 'Melia, what the dickens did I do with my new slippers?

MRS. SLATER [*confused*]. Artn't they by the hearth, grandfather?

ABEL. I don't see them. [*Observing Henry trying to remove the slippers.*] Why, you've got 'em on, Henry.

MRS. SLATER [*promptly*]. I told him to put them on to stretch them, they were so new and hard. Now, Henry.

[*Mrs. Slater snatches the slippers from Henry and gives them to Abel, who puts them on and sits in armchair.*]

MRS. JORDAN [*to Ben*]. Well, I don't call that delicate, stepping into a dead man's shoes in such haste.

[*Henry goes up to the window, and pulls up the blind. Victoria runs across to Abel and sits on the floor at his feet.*]

VICTORIA. Oh, grandpa, I'm so glad you're not dead.

MRS. SLATER [*in a vindictive whisper*]. Hold your tongue, Victoria.

ABEL. Eh? What's that? Who's gone dead?

MRS. SLATER [*loudly*]. Victoria says she's sorry about your head.





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ABEL. Ah, thank you, Vicky, but I'm feeling better.

MRS. SLATER [*to Mrs. Jordan*]. He's so fond of Victoria.

MRS. JORDAN [*to Mrs. Slater*]. Yes; he's fond of our Jimmy, too.

MRS. SLATER. You'd better ask him if he promised your Jimmy his gold watch.

MRS. JORDAN [*disconcerted*]. I couldn't just now. I don't feel equal to it.

ABEL. Why, Ben, you're in mourning! And Lizzie too. And 'Melie, and Henry and little Vicky! Who's gone dead? It's someone in the family. [*He chuckles.*]

MRS. SLATER. No one you know, father. A relation of Ben's.

ABEL. And what relation of Ben's?

MRS. SLATER. His brother.

BEN [*to Mrs. Slater*]. Dang it, I never had one.

ABEL. Dear, dear. And what was his name, Ben?

BEN [*at a loss*]. Er—er. [*He crosses to front of table.*]

MRS. SLATER [*R. of table—prompting*]. Frederick.

MRS. JORDAN [*L. of table—prompting*]. Albert.

BEN. Er—Fred—Alb—Isaac.

ABEL. Isaac? And where did your brother Isaac die?

BEN. In—er—in Australia.

ABEL. Dear, dear. He'd be older than you, eh?

BEN. Yes, five years.

ABEL. Aye, aye. Are you going to the funeral?

BEN. Oh, yes.

MRS. SLATER }  
MRS. JORDAN } No, no.

BEN. No, of course not. [*He retires to the left.*]

ABEL [*rising*]. Well, I suppose you've only been waiting for me to begin tea. I'm feeling hungry.

MRS. SLATER [*taking up the kettle*]. I'll make tea.

ABEL. Come along, now; sit you down and let's be jolly.





[Abel sits at the head of the table, facing spectator. Ben and Mrs. Jordan on the left. Victoria brings a chair and sits by Abel. Mrs. Slater and Henry sit on the right. Both the women are next to Abel.]

MRS. SLATER. Henry, give grandpa some tongue.

ABEL. Thank you. I'll make a start. [He helps himself to bread and butter.]

[Henry serves the tongue and Mrs. Slater pours out tea. Only Abel eats with any heartiness.]

BEN. Glad to see you've got an appetite, Mr. Merryweather, although you've not been so well.

ABEL. Nothing serious. I've been lying down for a bit.

MRS. SLATER. Been to sleep, grandfather?

ABEL. No, I've not been to sleep.

HENRY  
MRS. SLATER } Oh!

ABEL [eating and drinking]. I can't exactly call everything to mind, but I remember I was a bit dazed. I couldn't move an inch, hand, or foot.

BEN. And could you see and hear, Mr. Merryweather?

ABEL. Yes, but I don't remember seeing anything particular. Mustard, Ben.

[Ben passes the mustard.]

MRS. SLATER. Of course not, grandfather. It was all your fancy. You must have been asleep.

ABEL [snappishly]. I tell you I wasn't asleep, 'Melia. Damn it, I ought to know.

MRS. JORDAN. Didn't you see Henry or Amelia come into the room?

ABEL [scratching his head]. Now let me think——

MRS. SLATER. I wouldn't press him, Elizabeth. Don't press him.

HENRY. No, I wouldn't worry him.





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ABEL [*suddenly recollecting*]. Ay, begad! 'Melia and Henry, what the devil did you mean by shifting my bureau out of my bedroom?

[*Henry and Mrs. Slater are speechless.*]

D'you hear me? Henry! 'Melia!

MRS. JORDAN. What bureau was that, father?

ABEL. Why, my bureau, the one I bought—

MRS. JORDAN [*pointing to the bureau*]. Was it that one, father?

ABEL. Ah, that's it. What's it doing here? Eh?

[*A pause. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes six. Everyone looks at it.*]

Drat me if that isn't my clock, too. What the devils been going on in this house?

[*A slight pause.*]

BEN. Well, I'll be hanged.

MRS. JORDAN [*rising*]. I'll tell you what's been going on in this house, father. Nothing short of robbery.

MRS. SLATER. Be quiet, Elizabeth.

MRS. JORDAN. I'll not be quiet. Oh, I call it double-faced.

HENRY. Now, now, Elizabeth.

MRS. JORDAN. And you, too. Are you such a poor creature that you must do every dirty thing she tells you?

MRS. SLATER [*rising*]. Remember where you are, Elizabeth.

HENRY [*rising*]. Come, come. No quarrelling.

BEN [*rising*]. My wife's every right to speak her own mind.

MRS. SLATER. Then she can speak it outside, not here.

ABEL [*rising—thumping the table*]. Damn it all, will someone tell me what's been going on?

MRS. JORDAN. Yes, I will. I'll not see you robbed.

ABEL. Who's been robbing me?

MRS. JORDAN. Amelia and Henry. They've stolen your clock and bureau. [*Working herself up.*] They sneaked into





your room like a thief in the night and stole them after you were dead.

HENRY }  
MRS. SLATER } Hush! Quiet, Elizabeth!

MRS. JORDAN. I'll not be stopped. After you were dead, I say.

ABEL. After who was dead?

MRS. JORDAN. You.

ABEL. But I'm not dead.

MRS. JORDAN. No, but they thought you were.

[A pause. Abel gazes round at them.]

ABEL. Oh! So that's why you're all in black to-day. You thought I was dead. [He chuckles.] That was a big mistake. [He sits and resumes his tea.]

MRS. SLATER [sobbing]. Grandfather.

ABEL. It didn't take you long to start dividing my things between you.

MRS. JORDAN. No, father; you mustn't think that, Amelia was simply getting hold of them on her own account.

ABEL. You always were a keen one, Amelia. I suppose you thought the will wasn't fair.

HENRY. Did you make a will?

ABEL. Yes, it was locked up in the bureau.

MRS. JORDAN. And what was in it, father?

ABEL. That doesn't matter now. I'm thinking of destroying it and making another.

MRS. SLATER [sobbing]. Grandfather, you'll not be hard on me.

ABEL. I'll trouble you for another cup of tea, 'Melia; two lumps and plenty of milk.

MRS. SLATER. With pleasure, grandfather. [She pours out the tea.]

ABEL. I don't want to be hard on anyone. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Since your mother died, I've lived part of the time with you, 'Melia, and part with you, Lizzie. Well, I shall make a new will, leaving all my bits of things to whoever I'm living with when I die. How does that strike you?





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HENRY. It's a bit of a lottery.

MRS. JORDAN. And who do you intend to live with from now?

ABEL [*drinking his tea*]. I'm just coming to that.

MRS. JORDAN. You know, father, it's quite time you came to live with us again. We'd make you very comfortable.

MRS. SLATER. No, he's not been with us as long as he was with you.

MRS. JORDAN. I may be wrong, but I don't think father will fancy living on with you after what's happened to-day.

ABEL. So you'd like to have me again, Lizzie?

MRS. JORDAN. You know we're ready for you to make your home with us for as long as you please.

ABEL. What do you say to that, 'Melia?

MRS. SLATER. All I can say is that Elizabeth's changed her mind in the last two years. [*Rising.*] Grandfather, do you know what the quarrel between us was about?

MRS. JORDAN. Amelia, don't be a fool; sit down.

MRS. SLATER. No, if I'm not to have him, you shan't either. We quarrelled because Elizabeth said she wouldn't take you off our hands at any price. She said she'd had enough of you to last a life-time, and we'd got to keep you.

ABEL. It seems to me that neither of you has any cause to feel proud about the way you've treated me.

MRS. SLATER. If I've done anything wrong, I'm sure I'm sorry for it.

MRS. JORDAN. And I can't say more than that, too.

ABEL. It's a bit late to say it, now. You neither of you cared to put up with me.

MRS. SLATER }  
MRS. JORDAN } No, no, grandfather.

ABEL. Aye, you both say that because of what I've told you about leaving my money. Well, since you don't want me I'll go to someone that does.

BEN. Come, Mr. Merryweather, you've got to live with one of your daughters.





ABEL. I'll tell you what I've got to do. On Monday next I've  
 • got to do three things. I've got to go to the lawyer's and  
 alter my will; and I've got to go to the insurance office and  
 pay my premium; and I've got to go to St. Phillip's Church  
 and get married.

BEN }  
 HENRY } What!

MRS. JORDAN. Get married!

MRS. SLATER. He's out of his senses.

[General consternation.]

ABEL. I say I'm going to get married.

MRS. SLATER. Who to?

ABEL. To Mrs. John Shorrocks who keeps the "Ring-o'-Bells."  
 We've had it fixed up a good while now, but I was keeping  
 it for a pleasant surprise. [*He rises.*] I felt I was a bit of  
 a burden to you, so I found someone who'd think it a  
 pleasure to look after me. We shall be very glad to see  
 you at the ceremony. [*He gets to the door.*] Till Monday,  
 then. 'Twelve o'clock at St. Phillip's Church. [*Opening*  
*the door.*] It's a good thing you brought that bureau down-  
 stairs, 'Melia. It'll be handier to carry across to the "Ring-  
 o'-Bells" on Monday. [*He goes out.*]

*The Curtain falls*

Stanley Houghton

## THE DISCOVERY

### *Characters*

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

PEDRO GUTIERREZ, an officer.

PEPE, a page-boy.

JUAN PATINO,

DIEGO GARCIA,

FRANCISCO,

GUILLERMO IRES,

} other seamen.



*Note.*—Christopher Columbus first saw the light of the New World on the night of October 11, 1492. He was often "at open defiance" with his crew. These two circumstances, at least, are historical. For the rest, this little play had better be regarded as a work of imagination—H. O.

## APPROXIMATE PRONUNCIATIONS

PEDRO GUTIERREZ—*Páy-dro Goo-tee-érreth.*

PEPE—*Páy-pay.*

JUAN PATINO—*Hoo-dhn Pah-tée-nyo.*

DIEGO GARCIA—*Dee-áy-go Gar-thée-ah.*

FRANCISCO—*Frahn-this-co.*

GUILLERMO IRMS—*Gill-ydir-mo Ee-rays.*

SCENE.—*On board the "Santa Maria."*

TIME.—*October 11, 1492.*

[*The ship is seen from an angle, which brings the poop somewhat to the left, the quarter-deck taking up the greater part of the stage. If it is visible, the midmast should bear a crucifix, in passing which everybody mechanically crosses himself. A large lantern, containing a lighted candle, is fixed at the extreme top of the poop. The night is still, and there is little movement in the sails.*]

*Two seamen are visible, both well to the right. Juan is on his knees, adjusting rigging; Diego is helping. The actions of both of them are indeterminate, clearly designed to conceal their real purpose. They speak in loud whispers.*]

DIEGO. Within the next half an hour he will go to the poop-head as sure as God's alive. He can't keep away from it. His eyes are glued on the sky as if he expected his precious New World to burst out of it like a thunderbolt!

[*He laughs derisively.*]

JUAN. Poor wretch!

DIEGO. Now, then, Juan—quaking again!

JUAN. That's a lie! Why should I quake? What is there to fear? [After a brief pause] But I am sorry for him.





DIEGO. Why waste your pity? Shall it be one madman, his head stocked with visions, or forty honest seamen pining for their homes?

JUAN. But he's a *gracious* madman . . .

DIEGO [*impatiently*]. Gracious when all goes to his pleasure, but as irritable as a teething child when crossed!

[*A blasphemous song of the seamen is heard: it is a scarcely distinguishable murmur.*]

JUAN [*sharply*]. They ought to stop that. The captain is always furious when he hears it.

DIEGO. Shan't we even *sing* to keep up our spirits? 'Sh!

[*They attend with assumed assiduity to the rigging. Pedro Gutierrez comes in; he is somewhat surprised when he sees the others.*]

PEDRO. Who's that?

DIEGO [*rising*]. Diego Garcia and Juan Patino, sir.

PEDRO [*inclined to be communicative*]. It's dark. I would welcome the moon. . . .

DIEGO. Aye, aye, Don Pedro. Some of us would welcome the coast of Spain still more.

PEDRO [*pumping*]. Impatient, Diego?

DIEGO [*surlily*]. There are limits to patience, sir.

PEDRO [*humouring him*]. And you've reached them, eh?

DIEGO. We're like bats trying to fly by day. It's time he gave way. Why should one man have the lives of fifty in his hands?

PEDRO [*with authority*]. I hope we are not entertaining mutinous thoughts, Diego.

DIEGO. Mutiny is an ugly word, sir.

PEDRO. And an uglier deed.

[*Juan, finishing his job at the rigging, rises, and with a salute goes off. Columbus comes on. He is a tall, well-built man of forty-six. Hair prematurely white, complexion fair, almost ruddy. A man of quick temper and irritability which he controls only with an effort.*]



*His face, in repose, is melancholy. Seeing Don Pedro in conversation with Diego, he looks a trifle suspicious. He turns quickly to Diego.]*

COLUMBUS. That candle on the foremast is guttering; see that it is put right.

DIEGO [*sullenly*]. Aye, aye, sir. [*He goes.*]

COLUMBUS [*recalling him*]. And, Diego!

DIEGO [*coming back*]. Yes, sir.

COLUMBUS. This is the quarter-deck.

DIEGO. Yes, sir.

COLUMBUS. A good sailor knows his place.

DIEGO [*with repressed fury*]. Yes, sir.

[*Columbus points off; Diego, scarcely concealing a scowl, goes off.*]

COLUMBUS [*to Pedro*]. A surly dog!

PEDRO. And a dangerous one. He does more than his share to inspire discontent.

COLUMBUS. I have remarked it.

[*Columbus is thoughtful for a moment and remains stationary. Presently he goes on to the poop and looks out to sea. Pedro follows him. Simultaneously, Pepe, the page-boy, emerges from the hatchway, against which he stands, out of sight of the others. When they begin to talk he listens eagerly.*]

COLUMBUS. Easterly, ever easterly. God is in the wind, Don Pedro.

PEDRO [*with a short laugh*]. The crew would say that it is the Devil, rather, captain. All day, and every day, the wind blows easterly, blowing them away from their homes and their country, their wives and children, their friends and sweethearts.

COLUMBUS [*hastily*]. You too, Don Pedro? Do you, too, doubt?

PEDRO. Have I said so, captain? Am I not here by your side, prepared?





COLUMBUS. Forgive me, friend. You are one of the few with faith, and it is not easy to hold fast to faith when nothing seems to warrant faith. Listen to that.

[*The song of the seamen is heard again. Columbus and Pedro descend to the quarter-deck.*]

COLUMBUS. They drink too much.

PEDRO. They are simple men and must have their relaxation. [*The next words break from him almost involuntarily.*] We have not all your vision, captain.

COLUMBUS. You are beginning to doubt, Don Pedro. Give me the contents of your mind. I am an impatient man and prone to be unjust; but—[*whimsically*—] I mean well, Don Pedro. I mean well. Speak without fear.

PEDRO [*at first with diffidence, but rapidly gaining confidence*]. To-day is the 11th of October—more than two months since we saw the shores of Spain receding. You held a glittering hope of discovery before us, and we had faith. Day followed day, and soon we found ourselves in uncharted seas, but still we had faith. . . . I, at least, had faith. [*With dignity*] I am a man of some little learning, not easily led to wonder at natural phenomena as the unlettered might be. But I confess that I knew some uneasiness when the needle of the compass, instead of pointing to the constant North, jumped as if the devil had laid hand on it, and pointed to the North-west. I am not a child, nor a simpleton, nor a superstitious seaman; but there is such a thing as being too clever, prying into mysteries which were not meant for our eyes. In all humility, captain, I ask if it is God's will that we should pursue this voyage in the face of every portent of ill-luck?

COLUMBUS [*impatiently*]. It is my will. Is that not enough?

PEDRO [*bowing his head*]. I am answered.

COLUMBUS [*hastily*]. Forgive me, Don Pedro. A curb for my tongue—oh, a curb for my unbridled tongue, my worst enemy! [*More quietly*] My will, friend, because God's will, shall that suffice?





PEDRO [*not appeased*]. I do not claim your confidence, sir.

COLUMBUS [*thundering again*]. But I claim yours. [*The sound of the seamen's song is again heard.*] A blight upon their singing! Bid them stop. [*Pedro goes off, with an air of discontent. When he is alone, Columbus looks out at sea. Muttering.*] Mystery? Would God implant the desire to solve mysteries and not provide the solution? [*Suddenly Pepe runs up the steps to the poop. Columbus is startled.*] Who is that?

PEPE. Me, captain—Pepe!

COLUMBUS [*frowning on him*]. Have you been there all the time?

PEPE. Please, sir, I am off duty.

COLUMBUS. Then why aren't you down below?

PEPE [*whimsically, knowing that he is privileged*]. I prefer your company to theirs. [*He points below.*] Am I in the way here, sir?

COLUMBUS [*humouring him*]. What a boy! And what do they say of the preference?

PEPE. I don't speak to them. I hate them.

COLUMBUS. 'Sh, Pepe! And get you gone! [*Pepe turns reluctantly.*] Quick! [*The boy goes more quickly.*] Here! You heard what Don Pedro said?

PEPE. Yes, captain. And he is the best . . .

COLUMBUS. But even he doubts . . .

PEPE. Everybody doubts . . . except me.

COLUMBUS [*bitterly*]. Everybody . . .

Pepe [*eagerly*]. Except me, captain, except me.

[*He goes to him impetuously.*]

COLUMBUS [*laying a hand on the boy's head*]. You are young enough to have faith. Thank you, boy.

[*The seamen's song is heard again.*]

PEPE. They are horrible when they drink too much. They say it makes them forget.

COLUMBUS. Poor fellows!



PEPE [*approaching nearer*]. Captain, be careful! Sometimes they are desperate.

[*The song surges up like a growl.*]

COLUMBUS. That is ugly. I bade Don Pedro stop them. So you think they might become dangerous? [*Don Pedro returns.*] Go, boy. [*Pepe moves away, but does not go out.*] Well, Don Pedro? Their singing changes to a roar. The deepening of their discontent is ominous.

[*The noise grows louder.*]

PEDRO. Captain, they ignore my order.

COLUMBUS [*furious*]. I'll make an example of one of them [*Suddenly.*] Hallo, there! What sneaking mischief-maker is that crawling about the deck? Show yourself! [*Francisco appears from the right.*]

COLUMBUS. Ho, Francisco—you, is it?

FRANCISCO. Yes, sir. And I'm no sneaking mischief-maker.

COLUMBUS. Then why behave as one? Why are you here? Did I send for you? Is discipline obsolete in the Ocean Sea? Is Jack as good as his master nowadays?

FRANCISCO [*humbly*]. Your words sting, sir!

COLUMBUS. And are meant to. I am tired of the mumbling and grumbling of the crew. I have been patient too long.

FRANCISCO. I came to warn you, sir. The temper of the crew is dangerous.

COLUMBUS. Danger is the breath of my life. I should doubt I lived if I lived outside danger.

FRANCISCO [*the words springing from him spasmodically*]. Our power of endurance has gone. We refuse to go on. I warn you. I respect your person and do not wish to see violence used; but it is more than mortal can bear, this endless sailing into unknown seas.

COLUMBUS [*to Pedro*]. Don Pedro, the ship is in your hands. I will talk to our friend as man to man. [*Pedro goes*



on to the poop. Columbus, his voice gentler, almost ingratiating, turns to Francisco, who shifts from foot to foot, nervous by reason of the unaccustomed propinquity.] Francisco, let me plead with you. There are men whom God has chosen for the working of His will. I am such a man. There is no more merit in me than in this ship: we are both instruments of God. Sometimes He chooses oddly: a stronger than I might have served His purpose better. But since God chose me, who shall withstand me? The four corners of the earth are to be linked up in the knowledge of their Saviour. I have lifted the veils which obscured the prophecies of Holy Writ, and I have learned that it was ordained that I, chosen among all men, should discover that great world beyond the ocean which I know exists as surely as I know that Heaven exists.

FRANCISCO. Must simple men suffer because of *your* knowledge?

COLUMBUS [*quickly*]. Simple men shall do their duty.

FRANCISCO. There are limits to duty. Men will give up many things for duty and for gain, but you ask too much. Country, family, friends, perhaps even life itself—all these things you ask us to give up for *your* glory. *We* are not chosen of God to open up new ways: we are simple, humble men, sick for our homes.

COLUMBUS. My Heaven, Francisco, you try me. . . .

FRANCISCO [*gaining courage*]. Not more than you try us, sir. I come to you as a friend, sir. The men are at the end of their patience and spoiling for a fight. The stoutest rope breaks at last. [*The song swells up again. Spoken words mingle with the song, and the voice of Guillermo Ires is heard above the rest.*] Did you hear that, sir!

COLUMBUS. I heard the snarling of angry beasts.

FRANCISCO. You heard the just complaints of angry men, sir. [*Again Guillermo's voice pierces the din. Columbus stands rigid, endeavouring to catch the words.*] Did you hear that, sir?





PEPE [*who has been unobserved*]. They shan't! They shan't!

COLUMBUS. Boy, come here. What were the words?

PEPE [*almost weeping*]. He said: "The Santa Maria will be the lighter for his carcass."

COLUMBUS [*bitterly*]. He said that, did he?

[*He blinks—is moved more than he will show.*]

FRANCISCO. I am sorry, sir. . . . I knew how high feeling had run.

COLUMBUS [*authoritatively*]. Send Guillermo Ires to me!

FRANCISCO [*not without diffidence*]. Sorry, sir, but . . .

COLUMBUS. Discipline knows no buts.

FRANCISCO [*angrily*]. Discipline is a thing of the past, sir. It's you or us.

COLUMBUS [*to Don Pedro*]. Don Pedro, let Guillermo Ires be sent to me. He shall know what it is like in irons.

[*Pedro is half-way down the stairs to the quarter-deck when Guillermo Ires and other seamen rush in an angry mass towards Columbus, growling like infuriated animals.*]

COLUMBUS [*in a thunderous voice*]. Stop! What is the meaning of this wild uproar? [*The men stand transfixed.*] The first man to move shall spend the rest of the night in irons!

[*There is a perceptible pause, during which nobody moves. Then, with a wild cry, Guillermo Ires breaks away from the others and advances towards Columbus.*]

GUILLERMO. And who's to put him in irons? We are thirty to one.

COLUMBUS [*calmly*]. If nobody else is available for the office, I will perform it myself. Get below! Let me hear no more of this.

GUILLERMO [*in high excitement*]. We've stood too much. We've been duped day in, day out. We're men with the common feelings of men. We want our homes. I say the Santa Maria shall turn her helm towards Spain at once, or we are not men but sheep.



COLUMBUS [*still calm*]. And who shall navigate her?

GUILLERMO. There's plenty here who can do that. The Devil's with you, we all know that, riding the easterly wind; but we are not men unused to the sea. Once clear of this Devil's track to nowhere, we'll blow our way back to home.

[*Signs of assent from the rest of the crew. Columbus raises his hand, appealing for silence. He is paler than his wont, but very calm.*]

COLUMBUS. Don Guillermo, you are an excellent sailor, a man of abundant resourcefulness. Some day, if your tongue does not run away with your discretion, you will achieve prosperity in your calling. To-day you are an able-bodied seaman and no more: I am your captain. Your duty is to obey me as mine is to obey the Royal Sovereigns of Spain who sent me. Let that be clearly understood between us and we shall not fall out. Now return to your duties.

[*Again a perceptible pause. Columbus's authoritative manner holds them. Presently Diego breaks out.*]

DIEGO. Words for children! Froth and scum! We are men: reason with us!

COLUMBUS. Silence!

[*The tone of authority calms the men, who remain, however, in a huddled crowd, murmuring discontentedly. Columbus turns and goes up the stairs to the poop, where he stands and looks down upon the men.*]

DIEGO [*snarling*]. I suppose you think you're on holy ground now? [*He bounds towards the stairs.*]

VOICES [*tumultuously*]. Have him down! Pitch him overboard! Put him in irons! Devil's tool! Italian renegade!

[*They are about to stampede up the poop gangway, when Pepe runs to the foot of the stairs and stands with his arms spread out.*]

PEPE. Cowards! Cowards! You will have to kill me first!





VOICES. Out of the way! Devil's whelp! Lickspittle!

COLUMBUS. What! Does that child stand between me and death? [*Silence follows the commencement of his speech.*] Pepe! Come here!

PEPE [*going to him quickly*]. My captain!

[*The men are somewhat sheepish.*]

COLUMBUS. Pepe! This is a voyage of discovery. [*The men growl.*] I set out to discover a new world, a radiant land beyond unknown seas; to find new wealth and dominion for our Sovereign King and Queen, new souls for the sacrifice of our Saviour to redeem. So far I have discovered but one thing. [*He pauses and continues with slow deliberation.*] I have discovered that when a man is given a vision he must follow it alone. Loyalty passes like seaweed on an outgoing tide. Friendship breaks as a mast followed by worms breaks. Discipline, duty, and honourable obedience are bubbles that burst at the first contact. There remains but oneself. That is my only discovery so far, Pepe.

PEPE [*his eyes gleaming with excitement*]. Captain, I am loyal. I am still obedient, still your devoted servant. . .

COLUMBUS [*with some emotion*]. I am not ungrateful.

PEDRO [*scraping his throat, with dignity*]. I hope my loyalty has never been in question, sir? [*He salutes.*]

COLUMBUS [*returning the salute*]. You have sometimes been silent, Don Pedro, when speech would have made your loyalty clear. But I thank you. . .

[*Columbus turns and looks out at sea: for a moment his attention is fixed. He peers more earnestly into the darkness. There is a movement among the men. He turns.*]

JUAN. We are simple men, sir. . . .

COLUMBUS [*hastily*]. Shall simple men judge their betters?

GUILLERMO [*surlily*]. We may as well wait till to-morrow, at any rate.



COLUMBUS. Dark deeds are better done in the dark.

[*Guillermo, scowling but sheepish, slinks off, followed by one or two of the seamen.*]

FRANCISCO. Desperate men do not always act up to the best that is in them, sir,

COLUMBUS [*with quiet irony*]. I thank you for reminding me, Francisco. Your best cannot be bettered. Good-night!

[*Francisco half-turns to speak again, but thinks better of it and goes, shamefaced. Several others go, too, sheepish. A brief silence. Columbus does not move; he is struggling with overwrought emotion. When he speaks his voice is not steady.*]

COLUMBUS. Go, boy!

[*Pepe seizes his hand, kisses it, and hastily descends to the quarter-deck and goes out.*]

COLUMBUS [*turning to Pedro*]. Two minutes ago, Don Pedro, I saw . . . I thought I saw . . . [*He peers into the darkness.*] It was . . . it is . . .

PEDRO [*in excitement*]. What, sir?

COLUMBUS. A light, faintly flickering, rising up and down, Look! [*He points.*]

PEDRO. It is, sir! Glory be to God!

[*At this moment there is a wild shout, off.*]

VOICE [*off*]. A light! A light! Land! Land!

[*A sailor comes running on, delirious with joy and excitement.*]

SAILOR. Did you see it, sir? A light! Blessed Mother of God! A light!

COLUMBUS [*with quiet authority*]. Give the order to heave to.

Curtain

Hermon Ould





## JOAN OF DOMREMY

If we run through all the great names of the world, and think of all the great things men have ever done, we shall find nothing to stir the human heart like the story of Joan of Domremy. She never lived beyond her teens, and all her greatness came in two short, vivid years, but in those two years she made herself the wonder of the world.

She startled France and England too; she struck dismay to the hearts of kings and lifted up the hearts of common people; she led armies into battle and gained great victories; she raised her country up from misery and gave it hope and confidence; and as a reward they took this matchless girl and put her in the fire, and sat round her while she burned.

It is the most unbelievable thing in history—the greatest story, the most thrilling adventure, the most pathetic tragedy, and the most incredible fact in the story of a thousand years of Europe, and every word of it is true. The life of this village maid is the only life in history of which every fact is proved on solemn oath. The archives of France are the witness to the truth of it, and we see in this wondrous story a miracle as if the Hand of God Himself were writing it for men to read.

God sent Joan into the world five hundred years ago, in the village of Domremy, on the banks of the Meuse. He took her back to Him in nineteen years. She came into our human history through a heavenly vision. She burst upon France like a miracle. She lives in its memory at this very hour like an inspiration and a dream.

She came into a France that was torn to pieces as France has been torn since, but the France of Joan was torn to pieces from within. We think of our King Harry in those times, and we love to think of him with the glow of Shakespeare about him, with his fine speeches and his quenchless love of this land, this realm, this England,

That never did, nor never shall,

Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.





But let us think of France in those days of Agincourt. France lay stricken at the feet of her English kings. Deep in the valley of humiliation lay that beautiful land. Her own king was mad, and his son was worse than mad. Her people were split into groups which hated each other more than they hated the foe, so that Paris hailed the English king and half of France allied itself with the invader. The king's son, heir to the throne, lived like a poltroon in a court which would have seen France bleed to death and care nothing so long as it could eat and drink and sleep.

So the life of France swayed this way and that, as the life of an army sways. Men-at-arms would burst on towns and villages, pillaging and sacking them. Boys would watch all day from the church towers to see if the soldiers were coming. On the high-road to Germany lay the village of Domremy, and as Joan sat in her father's fields with his flocks and herds, or sat sewing with her mother by the window, making embroideries for the church, she would hear the tales of war. She would be eight years old when France was delivered to the English king; she was ten when Henry died and left an English child as supreme lord of France.

She loved France—France with her little churches and her great cathedrals, France with her heroes and saints; she loved the church bells and the oak wood near Domremy, and the magic well, and the great tree, and all the legends that seemed to be so true; and especially she loved the light that shone through the old church windows, with St. Michael in his shining armour and St. Margaret holding up her cross.

These things were real to Joan. She saw the vision and heard the voices as from heaven. She saw the white and shining saints and believed that they were calling, and one day in her garden these voices startled her. She was to save poor France, she was to go to the Dauphin, the king's son, and save him from his evil court and crown him king at Rheims. 'Daughter of God, go on; I will be with you,' the voices said, and Joan listened with trembling and wonder, for she was a





simple village maid and knew nothing of that great world about the throne.

Little did the peasants passing by that cottage garden realise the wonder that was working there. All this child's pity for France in its great agony, all her scorn of the enemy within its gates, mingled with the vision and the voices, and slowly she felt beyond it all a power that was not of this world. Her life was illumined with a light from heaven; the solemn forces that lie about and above and beyond mankind were working in her: this country girl was all aglow. She moved on earth, yet she seemed like one in another world. Looking back through all these centuries, we feel that of all the people on the earth in those unhappy times this child was the most inspired. She believed that God was speaking to her through His saints, and she did a rare thing in this world. *Believing in God, she lived every hour as if she believed in Him.*

No facts can explain Joan; she turns all history upside down. We have simply to believe what happened. This girl of sixteen set out to save France, to set a tottering king firm on the throne, to drive the English from their strongholds, and to give France a vision that should lift her high among the nations. She set out on this great adventure with no other weapon than her faith in God, and she did what she set out to do. Five hundred years have passed, and France would lose all the priceless treasures in the Louvre, all the glories of art in her streets, all the money in her banks, and all the visible wealth she has, rather than lose the sweet and precious memory of Joan of Arc.

Nothing could keep Joan back—she saw her path and followed it. Her father would rather drown her in the Meuse, he said, than see her riding with soldiers, and when she went to the captain of the town and said that she must go to the Dauphin to make him crowned king, the captain told her friend to box her ears and send her home.

But Joan came back undismayed. She consulted her uncle, the uncle consulted the captain, the captain consulted the priest, the priest consulted Joan, and in the end the priest





took this child with the spirit of God in her and ordered the spirit of the devil to come out of her. But God is not mocked. He chooses the simple things of this world to confound the wise, and in the end captain of Vaucouleurs met Joan, with two guardians, on the road to the court at Chinon. She guarded herself and her stainless name by putting on boy's clothes, and for eleven days these three travelled by dangerous ways. They slept by day and rode by night to avoid the bands of Englishmen, and forded rivers to miss the towns, but Joan was unafraid. 'God clears the way for me,' she said; 'I was born for this'; and at last they reached the court.

It was the most contemptible court in Europe. To the end of time it will remain a mystery why a pitiful creature like Charles the Seventh should have been saved by Joan of Arc. To most of us it seems an appalling thing that the inspiration of this heavenly maid should have gathered round a man so base as Charles. He was a fop and a fool. He wasted his life in an idle court, surrounded with snobs and dandies and tinselled ladies. He sat there, said Mark Twain, looking like a forked carrot. He wore tight clothes, shoes with a curled-up toe a foot long, a crimson velvet cape, and a sort of thimble cap with a feather sticking out, and it was this jest of France, looking like a box of paints in all his colours, and nursing a pet dog, who stood for the great idea of monarchy that held nations together in the ancient days of superstition.

We must remember that all through the story of Joan. It was not for Charles the Base she did these things—it was for the King of France. The king was the centre and very heart of France, and Joan could see no hope for France until its heart was right. And so for the sake of the kingdom she tried to save the king. He was not even sure, this poor creature, whether he was the lawful king or not, but Joan had no anxiety about that. What she was sure about was that no king was true till he had consecrated his life to noble things. This Dauphin, if he would lead a new life in France, must be anointed by God and crowned king, and Joan would see to it.





And so, after two days' waiting, they led her in to the king. She was now seventeen and he was twenty-six. We can almost hear the tittering of the fops and dandies as the country maid walked in, but Joan ignored them all and knelt before the king. 'God give you good life, gentle Dauphin,' she said; and then the Dauphin played a trick on Joan. 'It is not I who am the king,' he said; 'there is the king.' But she was not to be deceived. 'Gentle prince, it is you and no other,' she said; 'I am Joan the Maid. I am sent to you by the King of Heaven to tell you that you shall be crowned at Rheims.' And then she took the king aside and said something in secret to him which for ever after he regarded as a proof of her sincerity and inspiration. The king had a bitter secret, and what Joan said to him showed that she understood.

But the king, believing in Joan as he was bound to do, was afraid of the pompous clowns about his court. He could not stand their ridicule, and priests and soldiers and lords and ladies pooh-poohed the country girl. 'You say God will deliver France,' said a priest; 'if so, He has no need of men-at-arms.' 'Ah,' cried Joan, 'the men must fight; it is God who gives the victory.' Another monk pooh-poohed the voices, and asked what language they spoke. 'Much better than yours,' said Joan. They asked her for signs, and she said: 'I have not come to give signs; take me to Orleans.'

She was rather clever, they must have thought, and in the end, after much more questioning, it was announced that the king, 'bearing in mind the great goodness that was in the Maid,' would make use of her. The English were besieging Orleans, and their great fortified towers around the town blocked the king's road to Rheims. To drive them from these towers and raise the siege was the first thing commanded of Joan. They gave her a standard of white and gold, and on it was embroidered the portrait of Christ. All through her triumphs, to the end of her days, she bore with her own hands this standard of the Light of the World. The king would have given her a sword, but she asked that someone would go to a certain church





and bring a sword that was buried behind the altar there, and they went and found the sword and brought it. It is said that through all the battles which she led she never struck a blow.

She was put at the head of all the king's armies. She had power over all his generals and captains, and in April, 1429, she led them to Orleans. She must have looked a heavenly figure, clad in armour of dazzling white. The peasants pressed about her horse to touch the hem of her garment. All through her life the simple folk believed in her. It was the generals and the priests who stood in her path and pestered her and thwarted her. She chose her own way for approaching Orleans, and the generals deceived her and took her by another, but she found them out and said: 'The counsel of God is more sure than yours.'

Having reached the town, she sent a letter to the English, asking for the keys of all the good towns they had taken by violence in God's France, and begging them to leave the kingdom. If they would not believe her, she would make her way, 'and make so great a commotion as has not been in France for a thousand years.' The King of Heaven would send more strength to the Maid than the English could bring against her in all their assaults, but if they would act according to reason the English might still come in her company 'where the French will do the greatest work that has ever been done for Christianity.' The English mocked her as her own generals did; they sent their fierce defiance to the dairy-maid, and bade her go back to her cows.

But words were almost the only weapons the English fought Joan with in the siege of Orleans. She led her troops towards them, and the battle swayed this way and that, but never did the English fire when Joan came on. They stood still and trembled before this dazzling figure in white armour. The arrows flew about her, and she cried with the pain as she drew one from her body with her own hand, but this figure in white, bearing the flag of white and gold, must have awed the English in the towers. She led her troops as one man to the wall. They



flung themselves against it and the English fled, their forces broken.

It was like a bolt from the blue. Resting in a vine-yard after her wound, she heard talk of retreat. She knelt and said her prayers, planted her standard on the edge of the moat, and said: 'Let me know when the pennon touches the wall.' 'Joan,' they cried, 'it touches!' 'Then on, on! All is yours!' she said, and the town was relieved. The siege of seven months was raised in eight days. Joan of Domremy was Maid of Orleans.

The news flew from end to end of France. The king and all his fops were staggered. The priests could hardly believe. The generals were struck dumb. Joan urged the king on to Rheims, but they were all afraid. The king held long councils, but Joan rapped hard at the door, burst into the room, and cried: 'Noble Dauphin, why should you hold such long and tedious councils?' The court was impatient with this country girl. Not even Orleans could justify her in their eyes. There was plenty of time, said the Dauphin, and then Joan said one of the saddest things she ever said: '*I shall only last a year; use me as long as you can.*'

It was true: she lasted only a year. They reached Troyes, where the king was afraid to attack the English garrisons. 'Noble Dauphin,' cried Joan, 'order your people to assault the city. Hold no more councils, for, by my God, in three days I will introduce you into the town.' 'Joan,' said the Chancellor, 'if you could do that in six days we might well wait.' 'You shall be master of the place,' said Joan to the king, 'not in six days, but to-morrow.' And on the morrow, at the sight of the Maid, the English left the town. After Troyes fell Chalons, where the gates were opened to them, and, Chalons being not far from Domremy, a group of neighbours came to see if all these tales were true about their little maid. They saw her riding with the king, they saw her in those great triumphant hours, and, pressing round her, they asked if she were not afraid. 'I fear nothing but treason,' said Joan; and on she went, fearing nothing else





The campaign had lasted six weeks. There had been a victory almost every day, and Joan had never been defeated.

They reached Rheims, and the king and his court rode into the wondering town. Two bewildered rustics were watching from the windows of an inn. One was the uncle who had taken her to Vaucouleurs; the other was that father who had said he would rather see her drown than see her riding among troops. It must have seemed like another world to him to see Joan standing by the king in Rheims Cathedral, to see her kneeling before him thanking God, crying amid her tears: 'Now is the pleasure of God fulfilled.'

The king was crowned. Her vision had come true. She had done the work God had sent her to do, and she wanted to go home. France had a king again, and Joan was satisfied. To go from Rheims to Domremy was all she wanted now.

But she had made herself useful to the king and his fops, and perhaps even Charles was not altogether ungrateful. He offered her anything she asked for after he was crowned. She might have had horses and chariots, a palace full of servants, and raiment of fine gold. But what do you think she asked? She asked that Domremy might be free from taxes. It was all she asked, and they gave it freely. For 360 years you will find in the books of taxes, where the payments of all the towns and villages are set down, that opposite Domremy is no record of taxes paid, but simply the words 'Nothing, for the sake of the Maid.'

But, though they gave her what she asked, they broke her heart. Charles the Base, with his fools and his fops, was satisfied, and would do no more. He was satisfied with the name of king; to be every inch a king was not for a man who was every inch a clown.

And so, perhaps, Joan might indeed have gone back to Domremy had it been left to Charles, but at last the generals, stirred by triumph after triumph, were anxious to go forward. Joan, for the first time since she left home, doubted and faltered. She had done what the voices told her to do, and the voices



were no longer clear. But she went on, and at last she was resolved to deliver Paris. Soissons surrendered before her, Château Thierry gave way, and then this base king, who would have given her anything at Rheims, made a secret truce with his enemies and betrayed his own army. When Joan appeared before Paris, the king was safe seven miles away, and in the night he had destroyed a bridge that his army needed for its assault. Now, in the crisis of the battle for Paris, he called back his generals and abandoned Joan.

It was the meanest thing that even a king has ever done, but this creature on the throne of France was base enough for that. Joan found herself alone. The generals obeyed the king and left her. Never till that hour had Joan been beaten; it was the desertion of the king that changed her fortune. The loyalty about her was breaking down; authority was overcoming her. She had never mutinied; she had never acted independently; it was her mission to save the king and the kingdom of France, and she saved the kingdom through the king. She could not mutiny now, and she went to the Cathedral of St. Denys and laid her armour on the altar there. Her work was done.

Even then she would not desert the king who had deserted her. They gave her a place in the castle, where she stayed while the court went on with its idle life. This court was not too low to produce a rival maid who was willing to say anything that was put in her mouth; but Joan was too noble to be troubled by things like that. It was not natural, however, that her stainless purity could long endure the foulness of the court of Charles, and one day Joan left the castle suddenly. She said no farewells. There was nobody in all the king's court who was fit to tie her shoelaces or to tread the ground she walked on, and, as far as we know, she never saw the king again.

But once more these two come together in this story. Charles the Base was in danger at Compiègne. It was the place where, a little while before, Joan in an outburst of grief had said to a little group of children standing by: 'I have been sold and betrayed, and shall be given up to death. I beg of you



to pray for me, for soon I shall no longer have any power to serve the king and the kingdom.' It was pitifully true, but she gave her last strength to help this creature she had crowned. She hastened to Compiègne; she raised a troop to help the craven king; and there, in a wild rush of battle, she was surrounded and betrayed, and dragged from her horse into the dust.

And now we come to the saddest story since the day of Calvary. There was not a hand in the world that was lifted for Joan. There was not a kind word that was said for her by anybody who had power. There was not a general among all those whom she had led to victory who sharpened his sword to help her. Joan stood like One before outside Gethsemane—alone. If there was a spark of chivalry left in France, it was helpless and dumb. The people of the towns she had delivered wept for her; the whole population of Tours walked barefoot through the streets; but all official France was silent, while Paris lit its bonfires and sang the Te Deum in Notre Dame because Joan of Domremy was chained up in a cage.

Yes, they chained her in a cage. They sold her to the English, they put her in an iron cage at Rouen, they bound her to a pillar by her hands and feet and throat, and they set coarse soldiers to peep at her and mock her.

Think of old Rouen in those days—its quaint streets, its beautiful houses, and the majesty of its great cathedral—and picture everywhere a throng of swaggering men-at-arms, smug and comfortable priests, great men of the University of Paris, and bands of French traitors allied with the English invaders. They were there to hunt a girl to her death; they were there to fling the purest girl on earth to the most frightful fate they could think of.

Not an Englishman breathing is there now who is not ashamed of this page in our past, but to the English Joan was at least an enemy; she had beaten them in battle, and flung them from their strongholds. If we thrill with shame at the thought of what Englishmen did at Rouen, what shall we say



of Joan's own countrymen, who sold her to her enemies and sat by, idle and silent, while the hours of agony tolled slowly out for this fair maid of France? Since Judas sold his Master had been no more bitter day than this, when France sold its deliverer.

They kept her in her cage six weeks, watched night and day by common men, so that she was never for a moment alone. They made openings in the walls, through which she was spied on; they listened through crevices and keyholes for some word which might convict her; and then they dragged her to the chapel of the castle of Rouen, where sixty of the cleverest men in France confronted her.

They were her judges. The iron hand of the Church was over men in those days, and the Church was not what it is to-day. If you did not believe in it, and dared to say so, you were burned. In the centre of the judges sat the chief judge of all, the monster put there by the powerful Bishop of Winchester, who represented the English king. It was a clever trick to have Joan tried by her own countrymen, but it was foul play and not justice, and Bishop Cauchon, who conducted with a sort of glee this drawn-out torture of a peasant maid, was a selfish man who made himself a brute to get favour from his English masters. He was trained, as all these men about him were, in all the tricks and traps of a theology in which they had smothered religion, and it was nothing to him that this girl before him was the purest girl in France. He would chuckle, no doubt, to think that she was chained by one foot to a wooden beam by day and to the post of her bed by night. That was one of the pretty jests of this court of justice at Rouen.

But Joan was equal to her Inquisition. She faced her judges with the calm of Socrates and with something of his skill in answering questions. She held her own against them all, this girl fresh from her dungeon. She had loved the fields of France, she had striven to make its people free, yet this country girl, stifled for months in a dungeon and set before the greatest judges in the land, stood before her judges brave and not confused. They tried to baffle her with inane questions about the saints,



about their hair, and whether they wore crowns, and how they were dressed, and about their voices, but Joan would say that their voices were beautiful and humble and sweet, that she understood them well, and when they asked how the voices could speak without bodies she would say: 'I refer it to God.' They pestered her about a thousand trifles—every trick of a petty cheap-jack lawyer these bullies tried. They called up every incident that could be remembered in her country life; they treated her as some foul criminal.

They accused her of vanity because once or twice she wore the beautiful robes the king gave her. She loved all lovely things, and these men so near to beasts thought it worth while to call it a sin for the Maid of Orleans to like fine clothes. They accused her of self-glory because she carried her own standard at Rheims, and Joan said, with great feeling and great pride: 'It had borne the burden; it had earned the honour!'

For six days the public trial continued, with Joan in chains by day and night, and it seemed as if opinion might change about this girl who was not to be frightened by all the priests and bullies that could come against her. Once an Englishman cried out: 'Why was she not English, this brave girl?' But still no hand was raised for her, and Cauchon declared that he would examine her in secret in her cell. Perhaps he was ashamed to do his work in public, but in public she appeared again, and again and again. She was pressed and trapped and reminded of the torture-chamber, but whenever she was asked to submit she would say: 'I can say no other thing to you,' or 'I refer to the answer I made, and to our Lord.' 'Do you hope to catch me in this way?' she would cry in the great hall to her sixty-three judges; and when at last they brought her to the torture-chamber the only thing she answered was: 'Truly, if you tear the limbs from my body I can say no other.' But there were only two in thirteen who would have tortured her body, and she was saved from that. It was the only cruelty she was saved from.

For three months the battle between Joan and her judges



went on, and at last the decision arrived from the University of Paris, where the judges had gone to make up their minds. It declared her to be murderous and blasphemous and cruel and lying, and it handed her over to the secular judge. Nine men crowded into her chamber for a last appeal. If she would submit to the Church Joan might yet be saved. If she would say she was guilty of sin, if she would stoop down to the depths of these men, they would save her. If she would embrace the Church and abandon God, if she would sign this paper which said she was murderous and blasphemous and cruel and lying, they would not kill her.

Who would not like to have seen our proud Joan as she gave these nine men their answer? She said to them that *if she were in judgment and saw the fire lighted, and the faggots burning and the executioner ready to take the fire, and she herself within the fire, she could say no more.*

We do not know what the nine men said to themselves, but one man in that cell had a touch of chivalry left. He was Gilbert Manchon, the clerk who took down the whole record of the trial of Joan. Many times he was lifted up with admiration at the courage of this brave prisoner. Once he refused to go with Cauchon to his secret questioning in Joan's chamber because it was not lawful. Once he wrote on his notes that the words put into the mouth of Joan were the opposite of what she had said.

And now, at this great scene in her chamber, Gilbert Manchon forgot once more that he was but a clerk and remembered only that he was a man, and he wrote down in the margin against Joan's final answer, 'Responsio superba' the response superb, the proud answer of Joan.

Joan's year was ending; it was her last week on this earth. She waited for the voices, but they did not come, and her heart began to fail.

She must have thought of her home at Domremy and the great days at Orleans and Troyes and Rheims. She must have thought of those great ladies of the court who would sometimes



stoop to kiss her cheek in their excitement. She must have thought of the generals who seemed so loyal to her in her triumphs. She must have thought with tears of the common people who wept with joy to welcome her, and the mothers who held their children forward to touch her white armour. She would think of it all like a dream as she waited for the voices that seemed to fail her now, and this heart that had never been untrue since it began to beat, this heart that had never been afraid since it first knew danger, began to fail. She seemed to hear the hum of a murmuring world talking of a witch who was to be led out to the fire, and one morning they led her to the scaffold.

The great Winchester sat there, and the little Cauchon. There was a famous preacher to lecture Joan, and almost the last amazing thing we read of Joan is that she listened calmly to his preaching and interrupted only once—to defend the king from the insult of the preacher! Charles was base as base could be; he had deserted her though she delivered him; but still to Joan he was King of France, and she who had been captured in defending him stood by him on the scaffold from which he raised no hand to save her.

Once more they pressed her to submit. Did she not love her life? Would she not save the fire? Did she not love sweet liberty? Would she not trust the Church? 'Joan, why will you die?' the voices came from the crowd. 'Joan, will you not save yourself?' Her heart began to break. 'All that I did was for good, and it was well to do it,' she cried back; and at last, while still there was time, she cried: 'I refer everything to God and to the Pope.' But God was too far off from these men—from Cauchon, standing there with his two sentences written out: Imprisonment for life if she submitted; burning at the stake if she did not. They gave her papers and pressed her to sign, and in that last moment Joan signed her name. Gilbert Manchon was there to make his record, and on the margin he put down these words: 'At the end of the sentence, Joan, fearing the fire, said she would obey the Church.'



Then they sent her, not to liberty, not to justice, but back into captivity, back to the watchmen and the spies, and they put above her signature papers that she had not signed. These bishops put a lie above her name; these judges forged a confession.

Joan found them out, and all her courage came anew. She scorned them all. She would not have their lies above her name. She had confessed no guilt, she told them; all she had done was in fear of the fire.

It was what they wanted. Cauchon laughed when he heard it. 'Make good cheer, the thing is done,' he cried with glee to a courtyard full of Englishmen. Joan followed him—he to laugh and she to die.

They came to her in the morning, and again her heart failed at the thought of the fire. 'My body, which has never been corrupted, must it be burned to ashes to-day?' she cried. 'Ah, I would rather be beheaded seven times than burned!' Eight hundred English soldiers followed the cart as it rumbled to the old market-place of Rouen, and it seemed impossible to Joan that the powers of the universe would not intervene. 'Rouen! Rouen!' she cried. 'Am I to die here?' They reached the platform, with the chairs and benches for the bishops who were to watch her burn and the pulpit for the preacher who was to lecture her. Over the platform they put these lying words, which Winchester and Cauchon must have thought long over:

*Jeanne called the Maid, Liar, Abuser of the People, Soothsayer, Blasphemer of God, Pernicious, Superstitious, Idolatrous, Cruel, Dissolute, Invoker of Devils, Apostate, Schismatic, Heretic.*

That was what these people said of Joan, and those who knew her to be what she was—the messenger of God upon the earth—said nothing. She stepped on the platform and asked for a cross, but these bishops had not dared to bring a cross with them. It is good to think that an English soldier standing by took a stick, broke it in two, and quickly made a cross; it is good



to think that it was an Englishman who gave Joan, in that dread hour, the emblem of the only hope she had. She believed to the last that help would come. We are almost sure that her thoughts went back to the little church at Domremy where she first saw St. Michael on the windows, for she cried out from the depths of her heart: 'St. Michael! St. Michael! St. Michael! Help!' It was enough to break the heart of Winchester, and even Cauchon wept.

Let us pass it over. The fire was lit. Joan looked out through her tears for the last time on a world she had filled for ever with glory and pride, and the heart that had failed at the thought of all this was lifted up again by powers beyond this world. She heard the voices in the fire. 'My voices were of God,' she cried; 'they have not deceived me.' It was the last thing she said before the brave Bishop of Winchester threw her ashes in the Seine.

The executioner sought out a confessor and prayed to be forgiven. An Englishman who had sworn to add a faggot to the flames ran back with fear as he approached. A priest before the fire cried out: 'Would that my soul were where the soul of that woman is!' One of the secretaries of the King of England left the scene in great agitation, exclaiming: 'We are all lost for we have burned a saint!' As for Charles the Base, who amused himself while Joan was burning, he did nothing; but twenty years after, when they taunted him with receiving his throne from a witch, he had Joan tried again and found her innocent, and declared her great—to save his dignity, the dignity of such a thing as he! But as for Gilbert Manchon, he 'never wept so much for anything that happened to himself, and for a whole month could not recover his calm,' and then, with the money he received for making the record, he bought a book of prayers that he might pray for her.

That is the story of one who died at Rouen as One once died on Calvary.

Arthur Mee